NEW IN CHESS

THE RAMESH CHESS COURSE

#1

RAMESH RB

IMPROVE YOUR CHESS CALCULATION

Improve Your Chess Calculation

Ramesh RB

Improve Your Chess Calculation

The Ramesh Chess Course, Volume 1

New In Chess 2022

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Published by New In Chess, Alkmaar, The Netherlands
www.newinchess.com

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Cover design: Rouwhorst + Van Roon
Supervision: Peter Boel
Proofreading: Joe Petrolito, Mariska de Mie
Production, editing, typesetting: Sandra Keetman

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ISBN: 978-90-5691-997-9

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Explanation of Symbols

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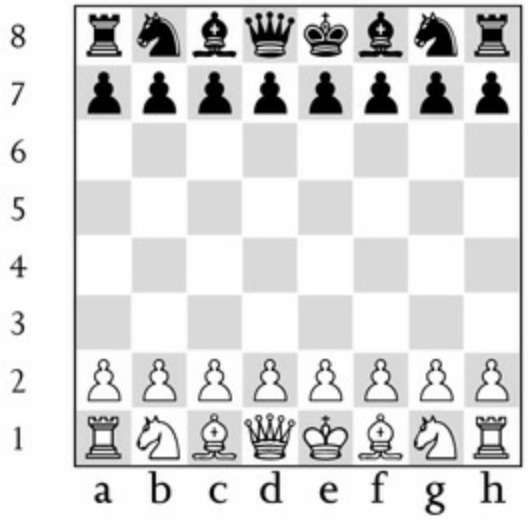


❑	White to move
■	Black to move
♔	King
♕	Queen
♖	Rook
♗	Bishop
♘	Knight
±	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±	White stands better
∓	Black stands better
+–	White has a decisive advantage
–+	Black has a decisive advantage
=	balanced position
!	good move

!!	excellent move
?	bad move
??	blunder
!?	interesting move
?!	dubious move
#	mate
ch	championship
zt	zonal tournament
izt	interzonal tournament
ct	candidates tournament
tt	team tournament
ol	olympiad
m	match
cr	correspondence

Foreword by Viswanathan Anand

RB Ramesh is one of the most illustrious personalities of Indian chess, who had a successful playing career being part of the Indian Olympic team in 1996 and 2002, subsequently becoming a grandmaster in 2003, with his most famous victory being the British Chess Championship in 2002.

After retiring from competitive chess in 2008, he established his training institute, the 'Chess Gurukul' which has been an impressive talent factory since its inception. He has been a trainer or coach of almost all the top Indian chess players since then, with Harikrishna, Adhiban, Sethuraman, Aravindh, Praggnanandhaa, Karthikeyan and Vaishali being an impressive array of top stars he has worked with. Befitting his training work, his wards have brought countless international titles and close to about 50 medals to the country.

Another of Ramesh's achievements is being the captain of the Indian chess team at the Chess Olympiad between 2012 and 2018, with the team bagging a historic bronze at Tromsø, Norway, 2014. I experienced his captaincy myself at the Batumi Olympiad 2018 and appreciated his perspective on chess.

The accolades which have come his way and the achievements of his students stand testimony to the hard work and dedication Ramesh has shown towards his profession. Ramesh has also invested a lot of time in chess research.

Working with so many chess talents has also resulted in Ramesh developing excellent structures in his coaching methods. The current series of books aim to share his knowledge as a player as well as a coach. He deals with calculation in this first one – the typical mistakes players make while calculating, the reasons such mistakes are made, and possible solutions. His experiences as a chess coach really shine through, as it is obvious that he developed his methods through practical experiences of his students over the years. Since he has worked with players in varying stages of their

development, he is able to select positions that all can benefit from.

I know from both my junior days and my World Championship matches that carefully selected positions can challenge you to go deeper and also show you the weaknesses in your thought process, and I am confident that everyone will benefit from the exercises in this book.

Vishy Anand
Chennai, March 2022

Introduction

At the outset, I submit that I do not feel qualified to write about a vast, intricate, and at the same time essential subject like improvement in chess calculation skills. That I even attempted such an exercise is motivated by the following reasons. As a chess coach, I have realised that in this critical aspect of chess, many players struggle a lot to make significant progress. I have worked with many talented young players and many grandmasters over the last two decades. I have seen first-hand how these strong players made progress in their analytical skills in general and their calculation skills in particular. I hope this book will act as a medium to share the knowledge and experience I acquired with a larger audience.

This book is written more by an experienced and reasonably successful chess coach than by an author. English, not being my mother tongue, is something I learned poorly at school! So, there could be many places where the choice of words may not be appropriate or correct. Forgive me for any mistakes related to language/grammar. I have tried my best to convey my thoughts as well as I could.

During my days as a player (effectively, my playing days were from 1989-2008), I faced many practical problems related to different aspects of the game. Some of my chief concerns were: how to improve my calculation skills, endgame technique, positional understanding, building an opening repertoire, etc. Chess improvement is a journey from ‘where we are’ to ‘where we should be’, with its inherent challenges.

Until 1998 or so, we (my generation of players in India) did not have access to good chess books, computers, and coaches. Most of the solutions we came up with were mainly by trial and error and from personal experience. Such an approach to improvement had its virtues and shortcomings.

Subsequently, when I started reading chess books by acclaimed authors,

initially I felt a world of information was thrown open to me. I could perceive things differently than earlier. I thought I had access to everything I needed to solve my doubts and problems. I am very thankful to all the great authors who have enriched my chess education. It felt as if becoming a stronger player was just a matter of time and hard work.

But with time, I also realised that there are a few critical areas where the books did not venture into with full conviction. One primarily ignored area was how to learn and acquire the necessary skills in chess education: the practical difficulties a player faces while trying to learn different aspects of the game, the reasons for such problems, and the methods to overcome them. A player must successfully navigate many psychological battles to convert the knowledge he has acquired by reading a book into a practical skill to apply in his games.

Let me explain with an example. We can read in many books that ‘we should develop our pieces quickly in the opening’. They give instances where one side ignores the development of pieces and is rightly punished for doing so. But despite reading or being taught all these principles with examples, I have seen in practice that most amateurs fail to develop their pieces properly. I have seen many instances where players rated up to even 2400 level make this kind of ‘beginner’s mistake’. Why does this happen?

The chess player is being influenced from two different directions all the time during a game. On one side is the player’s own biases, prejudices, personality, fears, convictions, likes, dislikes, and belief systems. To put it in another way, his very nature. On the other side, he is being influenced by the chess principles, the knowledge acquired from books, typical reactions acquired through personal experience, and the demands of the position on the board.

In other words, a player has to constantly choose between what he wants to do and what he has been told/taught/learning to do. Every chess player will have his own natural way of doing things. The chess principles guide us on how to do things in the correct way. If the chess principles do not conflict with the nature of the player, the player is able to absorb those principles and apply them effectively in his games.

If the chess principles teach things that run contrary to the nature of the player, the player finds it very difficult to accept those principles and apply them in his games. Whenever there is a contradiction between the chess principles and the player's nature, the player usually chooses to rely on what his instincts tell him to do rather than the chess principles. Over time, this becomes his nature and his weakness.

Ideally, a chess player should combine his instinct, reactions, and manner of thinking with his skills acquired through training and experience to deliver what is required by the position. Some things come to us naturally, and other things we have to learn by modifying our ways of looking and thinking about things. Many players remain loyal slaves to the habits they formed during the early stages of their chess career and, as a result, find making progress in chess a daunting task.

At times, the right thing to do in a position will be exactly opposite to what we would want to do. For example, the situation may demand that the player exchange the queens and go into an endgame with a slight advantage that needs to be nursed and converted into a win after patient play. But the player could have an aggressive nature in chess, and might want to keep the queens on the board and play in the middlegame. Some players may even consider the endgame phase of chess to be tedious and not to their liking. Such players may try to keep the queens on the board and avoid the endgame altogether.

In this book, I have tried to cover important instructions and examples about calculation, and a chapter is allotted to general chess improvement suggestions covering a wide variety of topics. An honest attempt has been made at sharing the training methods I use with my students to improve their calculation skills over the last two decades.

Happy learning!

RB Ramesh
Chennai, March 2022

Acknowledgements

I want to thank my family for putting up with me for more than two months of complete isolation from everything and everyone to write this book. For many days, I spent sleepless nights in my study with my computer getting the material ready.

My thanks to GM Anand Viswanathan for kindly agreeing to write the foreword for this book.

I want to thank my friend GM Sundararajan Kidambi who helped check the content for mistakes. He checked the text and chess content at every stage, suggesting corrections and coming up with exciting ideas to bring about this final product.

I want to thank our staff member Sivakami P for proofreading the text part of the book in a short time. I want to thank all my students for the numerous wonderful and instructive moments that I could share with them over the decades.

RB Ramesh

Testimonials from students

I have trained with RB Ramesh *anna* (= brother) numerous times from my childhood days. Thanks to the team events like the Olympiad and World Teams where he was the team coach, I have had many opportunities to closely interact with him and exchange ideas. I have learnt of lot of things from him in chess as well as personally. His unmatched wisdom and his ability to quite quickly grasp the strength and weakness of any player amazes me. An intelligent coach who values smart work. And the historic bronze medal for Team India at the Tromsø Olympiad in 2014 is mainly due to his fantabulous guidance and the tremendous belief he had in us. Friendly, super-confident, passionate, and a person of great work ethic and moral values. His training material is absolutely world-class and I strongly believe that his

series of books will be a treat for all chess lovers and chess learners.
Grandmaster Sethuraman Panayappan

I started working with Ramesh sir since the Baku Olympiad in 2016. I feel extremely lucky to work under his guidance. His dedication towards chess is immense and his contribution to Indian chess has been remarkable!
Grandmaster Karthikeyan Murali

I have known Ramesh *anna* very well for many years. He has always been a light-hearted and fun person... such a hard-working trainer, and he used to be online on Skype literally 24/7. Whenever we asked for some material, he used to send it to us instantly. He is one of the very few trainers in the world who is highly experienced and has worked with absolute beginners to elite players! I have learnt so many things from him, be it moral and ethical values or the bonding between trainer and trainee... makes us feel like home! I am very sure that he has given his very best for this book and that it will be useful for players of all levels, and I genuinely wish this book to also receive honours.
Grandmaster Shyam Sundar

After winning my first category national title in 2005, I had the opportunity to work with Ramesh *anna*; it was an enlightening experience. He taught me how to do opening preparation and some of the lines we worked on, I still follow to this day! A couple of years later I had the opportunity to work with him again during a training session for the Indian Olympiad team and this time he showed me how much he has grown as a coach and as a player by teaching me so many middlegame and endgame principles. 2018 was definitely one of my best career years so far. I won the Fischer Memorial (Reykjavik Open), qualified into the Indian team, and also won the strong closed round-robin event ‘Tournament of Peace’ in Zagreb. A big part of my success in 2018 I owe to Ramesh *anna*! I would dare to say that he directly influenced my play to cross 2700!

Grandmaster Adhiban Bhaskaran

I have been working with Ramesh Sir since 2014. From then on we started working on my calculations. Calculations became one of my strengths, which gave me a huge edge against my opponents when I was playing in my age category championships. I hope after reading this book you will also get better at calculation.
Grandmaster Praggnanandhaa

I've had the honor and privilege of working with GM Ramesh on my calculation abilities for approximately six months. Finding a trainer at my level is no easy matter, and I was looking for someone who would help me counteract a great deal of rustiness that emerged after four years of total inactivity due to university. I can confidently say that GM Ramesh has over-fulfilled every expectation I had. His skill in finding unique and fascinating material is unmatched: I have worked with over a dozen coaches in my chess career, and no one is as meticulous in analyzing and preparing fresh material as GM Ramesh. After only a month of intensive training, I could sense a seismic shift in both the precision of my calculation as well as my general level of sharpness.

Of course, GM Ramesh is knowledgeable in most other areas of chess as well. He is not merely a collector of material; his advice on topics ranging from chess psychology to schematic thinking to the use of intuition have informed my chess understanding and taken it to new heights. This advice stems from the massive amount of work he has done with leading grandmasters as well as his own accomplished tournament career.

I am confident that the book you hold in your hands is the product of meticulous work, and will take your tactical skills to the next level. No one I have come across is more qualified to write an illuminating book on tactics!
Grandmaster Daniel Naroditsky

How to use this book

1. Have a good look at every position and try to understand what is going on behind the scenes. Compare the king positions, piece placements, pawn structure, material parity, etc., before beginning your analysis.

2. Before we start analysing any move, we should make a list of reasonable looking moves and only then begin analysing them.

3. Sometimes I will suggest some moves apart from the main line to analyse for instructional purposes.

4. Do not move the pieces on the board while working on your calculation skills. We should try to visualise the variations in our mind until the next diagram, which becomes the new starting point, and carry on the same way forward. You can also try to play through the whole analysis in your mind if you can!

5. Multiple moves at times lead to the same evaluation: in such cases, I will try to give all instructive variations for training purposes. What one sees, another may not. If you are curious enough, try to work through both variations!

6. Hide the moves in the book with an opaque object. In this way, the training becomes more effective by finding the moves by yourself, rather than reading them from the book without making any attempt to analyse the position.

7. You will be given small tasks throughout the book with the amount of time given to analyse the position. Try not to look at the solution before you analyse it well on your own.

8. Think about the amount of time suggested. If you need more time to analyse, please take more time where necessary.

9. I will be using the word he/him to denote a person, more for simplicity than anything else.

10. I have divided the material into five categories:

Level 1 = Elo rating 1200-1600
Level 2 = 1600-2000
Level 3 = 2000-2400
Level 4 = 2400-2600
Level 5 = 2600 & above

The above is, of course, a general indication, and players with better calculation skills will be able to solve positions above their rating level. Similarly, some players could struggle to solve positions belonging to their rating level if their current calculation skills are not in good shape.

If you wish to gain more!

1. Once you have arrived at any conclusions in your analysis, try to go through the analysis you have just made and look for any possible mistakes. Writing down your analysis is also acceptable. Not writing down your analysis is also fine, so do what is comfortable for you.

2. Checking your analysis, finding mistakes and correcting them is the best way to improve your analytical skills.

3. This book aims to expose you to many exciting positions where we will face various problems. The way we face them and solve them is a good source of information about how our mind works.

4. After completing and checking our analysis, we should compare our conclusions with the book's analysis. Whenever our findings have some flaws, do not get disheartened. Getting disheartened is not the point of working to improve our chess skills. The mistakes we make should make us more curious about ourselves. They should enable us to make the necessary corrections in our priorities and thinking process. The ability to change oneself is the basis for effective learning. If we stick to our viewpoint too firmly, we miss the opportunity to evolve and grow.

5. It is essential for the work we do to translate into improvement in our analytical and problem-solving skills. For that to happen effectively, my suggestions are:

• Do not move the pieces while solving or analysing a position;

• Try to find good defensive resources for your opponent as well;
• Finding the first few moves is not enough; try to find the complete solution wherever possible;
• The solution we come up with eventually should be correct;
• Do all the above with efficient use of time/effort/energy.

6. Start with appropriate positions for your level and try to apply the guidelines given in point 7. Then progressively move to more challenging parts.

7. I have given the positions in this book to most of my students in the past. They try to analyse these positions without moving the pieces on a chessboard from the initial position until the end. Of course, I guide them in the right direction during this process without giving too many clues.

8. If you can find a helper, ask them to keep the book's initial position on the chessboard. You should then use the time suggested in the book to think, come up with your analysis and present it to your helper. He will compare your conclusions with the analysis given in the book. If there is any mistake in your findings, he can tell you. Sometimes he can point out the exact moment where you made a mistake. Then you can try again to find the correct analysis. Such a manner of training will be a time-consuming and slow process. But we will learn the importance of being responsible for our analysis and the need to be good at it.

9. The positions are chosen mainly for the instructive value they offer in the form of the moves/ideas that were played or in some cases the moves/ideas that were not found during the game. If a player missed an important concept, that does not reflect in any way on the strength of the player. We all make mistakes, and miss things occasionally. I thank all the players and composers who have been a source of material for this book.

10. In many places, some could get the feeling that there is an overdose of variations. I have seen in my experience as a coach that it is possible to analyse deep variations even for lower-rated players. When they learn to see more variations in less time with fewer mistakes, their playing strength increases phenomenally in a short time. I have seen 1800-rated players analyse Level 4 positions without moving pieces on the board (with clues and

suggestions provided by me at the right time in the process though).

CHAPTER 1

Dynamic and static positions

When I was a young chess player, I heard other players use terms to describe a position like open, closed, simple, quiet, or complex. I never used to pay much attention to these terms but understood the concepts in general.

Once I became a coach, I realised the importance of classifying positions in a more practical manner, which can be understood by correlation and applied by all in their thinking process.

In this context, I would like to classify positions into two major categories: **dynamic** and **static**.

In his book *The Method in Chess*, Iossif Dorfman briefly introduced the terms dynamic and static. To quote Dorfman:

'In many games the hierarchy of strategic factors, determining the evaluation of a position, varies, and plans and ideas are transformed. It is this that constitutes dynamism in Chess.

This short paragraph comprises in concentrated form the move search algorithm in Chess. Thus to foresee the modification of the hierarchy of strategic factors is nothing other than to be able to define critical positions. I suggest analysing essential positions on the basis of their static state without taking account of dynamic factors. This aim is served by the proposed static balance. Candidate moves are chosen in accordance with the static balance. Here we should perhaps dwell on the concepts of 'static' and 'dynamic' factors. By 'static' are implied factors that have an enduring effect. Whereas dynamic factors are associated with a change in the state of a position, with the energy of a breakthrough, with the coming into contact with the opposing army. With the passage of time their role diminishes and reduces to nought.

If for one of the players the static balance is negative, he must without hesitation employ dynamic means and be ready to go in for extreme measures.'

The manner, purpose, and the whole concept of classifying positions into dynamic and static by me, I believe, is vastly different from what was attempted by Dorfman. Let me elaborate.

Dynamic positions: By this, I mean positions where things are changing quickly, there is plenty of action, and many factors are constantly evolving and in flux. **Complex, open, attacking positions, positions with pawn breaks, and positions where forcing moves are possible can be categorised as dynamic positions**. Almost all the positions we will see in this book belong to this category, and hence we will not be giving any examples now.

Static positions: By this, I mean positions in which things are not changing quickly – they are relatively quiet, calm, and lacking concrete action. **Closed, quiet, simple, calm positions, positions with fixed pawn structures, and positions in which forcing moves are not possible can be categorised as static positions.**

All types of chess positions can come under either the 'dynamic' or the 'static' umbrella. Of course, in most positions, both the dynamic and static elements play their respective roles together in exerting their influence on the evaluation of the position. Chess has become more dynamic and concrete after the arrival of computers. In dynamic positions, factors like king safety, time and the quality of the pieces will have more value than quantity (material parity) and static factors like pawn structure etc.

By the time factor, I mean how quickly one can achieve one's objective. For example, to develop the bishop on the queenside, White can play either b2-b3 and ♗b2 (2 moves) or a2-a3, b2-b4 and ♗b2 (3 moves). The former takes less time to achieve our objective than the latter.

In static positions, the time factor is not that relevant, but factors like the quantity and quality of chess units and positional factors like pawn structures,

space, weaknesses etc., will have more value.

A good chess player should be able to handle both dynamic and static positions equally well. In a game, the nature of the positions keeps fluctuating from dynamic to static. There are games that remain largely static or dynamic throughout, but these are rare in modern chess.

Most players are partial towards either dynamic or static positions by nature. Back in the old days, if one could call himself an attacking player or a positional player, it was considered a virtue. Not anymore. Mikhail Tal was considered an ‘attacking player’, while Tigran Petrosian was considered a ‘positional genius’. These days, when access to information is universal, it is possible to learn to play both kinds of positions equally well.

Under the circumstances, it will significantly help chess players if we know in what areas we should train ourselves to gain mastery over dynamic and static positions.

In my view, the following plan would greatly help in this regard.

Critical areas to learn for dynamic positions

1. Calculation: I will elaborate on calculation in the third chapter under the heading ‘Personal interpretation of chess terminology’.

2. Attack: There are a few critical questions related to attacking:

a) whether to attack with pawns or pieces;

b) the need for the presence of weaknesses as a target to attack;

c) to attack from the front or from the flank;

d) to attack immediately or to prepare the attack by delaying it; and

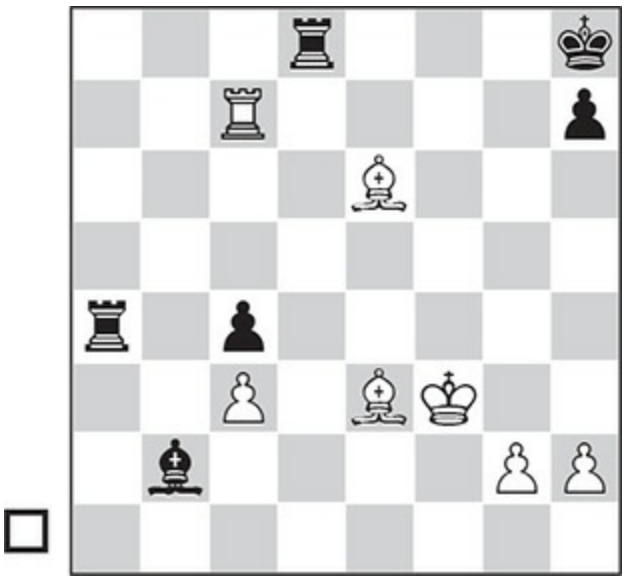
e) should the attack involve sacrificing material, or is that not necessary?

To handle dynamic positions well, a player should have good attacking skills.

Game 1 Level 1

Magnus Carlsen	2862
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	2784

chess24.com 2021 (2.13)



TASK*: Time to think: 2 minutes.*

34.♖c8!

34.♗h6 ♗xc3; 34.♗d4+? was played in this online rapid game. An understandable lapse of concentration in a speed game. It helped us get an interesting position to solve! 34...♖xd4 35.cxd4 ♗xd4 was unclear, though Magnus won the game anyway!

34...♖xc8

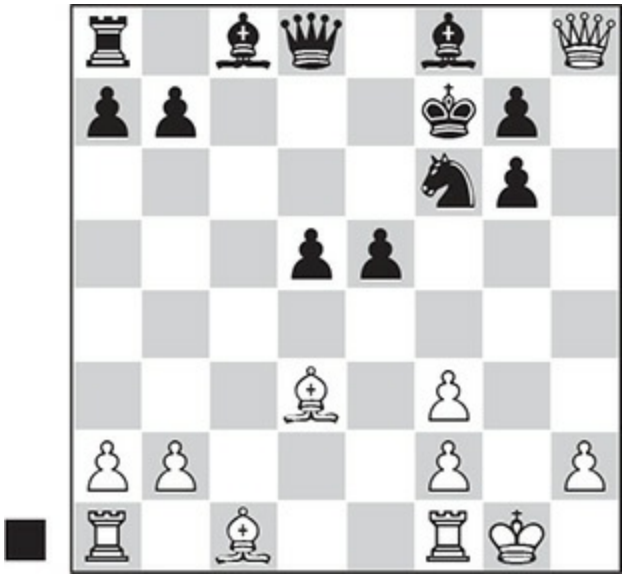
34...♖a8 35.♖xa8 ♖xa8 36.♗d4#.

35.♗d4#

Game 2 Level 3

Frank Darnstädt	2360
Markus Schäfer	2455

Berlin 1993 (6)



TASK 1*: Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

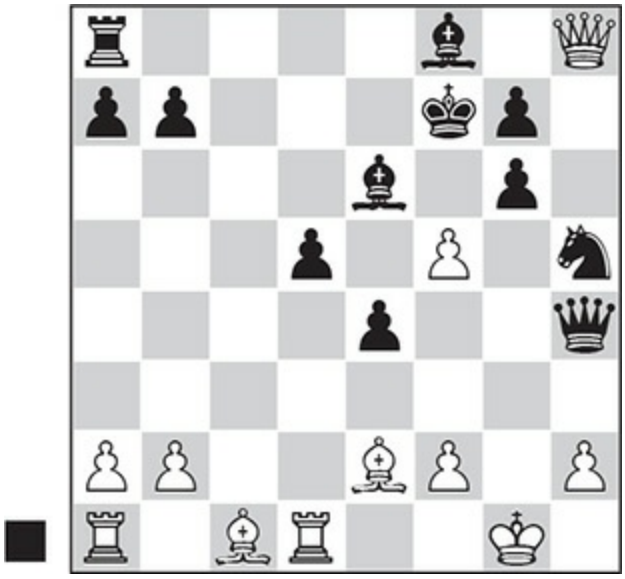
16...e4!

Prophylaxis against 17.♗xg6+.

16...♘h5? tries to shut the white queen out of the game: 17.♗xg6+! ♔xg6 18.♔h1 (threatening 19.♖g1) 18...♕h4! (18...♘f6? – Black is not paying attention – 19.♖g1+ ♔f7 20.♖xg7+! ♔e6 21.♗g5+-) 19.♕xf8 ♔h7 20.♖g1 ♕h3 (20...♕xf2?! 21.♕a3! ♗f5 22.♕e3 ♕xe3 23.♗xe3 d4 24.♗d2 ♘f6⩲) 21.♕a3! and White gets sufficient counterplay, for example: 21...♗f5! (21...♗d7? 22.♗d2 ♔g8 (22...♗c6 23.♖g5 d4 24.♔g1+-) 23.♖g5 ♖f8 24.f4! ♘xf4 25.♗xf4 ♖xf4 26.♕xh3 ♗xh3 27.♖xe5⩱) 22.♗d2 ♖c8 23.♖ac1 d4! 24.♖xc8 d3! 25.♖cc1 ♕xf3+ 26.♖g2 ♗h3 27.♖cg1 ♗xg2+ 28.♖xg2 ♘f4 29.♗xf4 ♕d1+=.

17.fxe4

17.♗c2 ♘h5-+; 17.♗e2!? ♘h5! 18.♖d1 (18.♗e3 ♕h4-+) 18...♗e6! (18...♕h4? 19.♖xd5 ♗e6 20.♗g5! ♕h3 21.♗c4!⩱) 19.f4 (19.fxe4?! ♕h4! 20.♗xh5 gxh5-+) 19...♕h4 20.f5!?



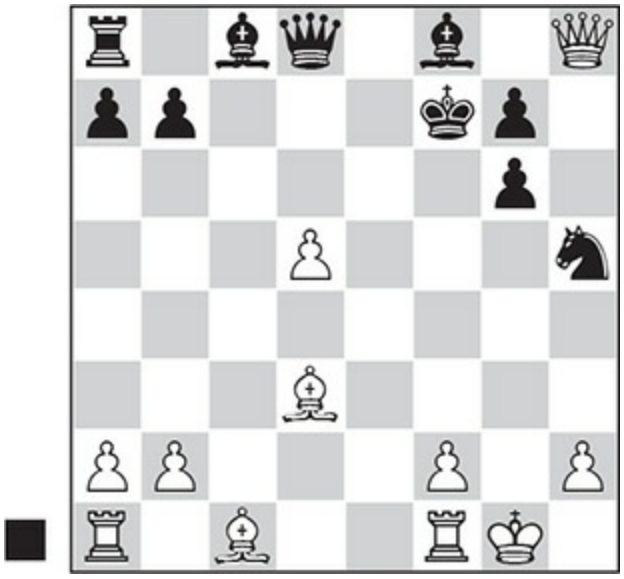
analysis diagram

TASK 2*: Time to think: 8 to 10 minutes.*

20...♔f6!! (20...♗xf5? 21.♖xd5+-; 20...♗d6!? 21.fxg6+ ♔xg6 22.♕xh5+ ♕xh5 23.♗xh5+ ♔xh5 24.♗e3∞) 21.♕h7 (21.fxg6 ♗g4! 22.♖xd5 ♗xe2 23.♗g5+ ♕xg5+ 24.♖xg5 ♔xg5 25.♖c1 ♖d8-+, the white queen is not going to join the game anytime soon!; 21.♗xh5 gxh5-+) 21...♔xf5! (only with this king walk can Black keep the advantage! 21...♗xf5? 22.♖xd5 ♔e6! 23.♕g8+ ♔f6 24.♗e3 ♘f4 25.♗d4+ ♔g5 26.♗e3 ♔f6 27.♗d4+=) 22.♗xh5 ♕xh5 23.♕xh5+ gxh5 24.♗e3 ♗d6-+.

17...♘h5! 18.♗e3?!

A) 18.exd5!?



analysis diagram

TASK 3*: Time to think: 5 minutes.*

A1) 18...♕h4?! 19.♗xg6+! ♔xg6 20.♕xf8 ♗f5!? 21.♕a3! (21.♕d6+? ♔h7 22.f3 ♖e8-+) 21...♕g4+ 22.♔h1=;

A2) 18...♕xd5! is the other option, but the next move should be found and assessed properly: 19.♖d1 ♕e6!! and Black retains a strong attack, for example 20.♗e3 ♕g4+ 21.♔h1 (21.♔f1 ♕h4-+) 21...b5-+;

A3) 18...♕f6! 19.♕h7 ♗d6-+.

B) 18.♕h7 ♕h4-+;

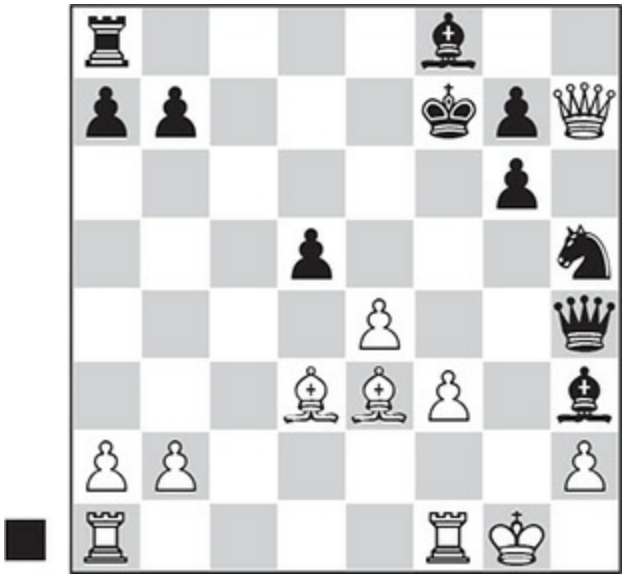
C) 18.e5!? is probably the best defence. I have been showing this position to my students for some years now and when I was checking the lines closely for this book, I was shocked to find that this position arose in a correspondence game in 2014! 18...♕h4 19.♗xg6+ ♔xg6 20.♕xf8 ♕g4+ 21.♔h1 ♗f5 22.♕a3 ♕e2! 23.♖g1+ ♔h7 24.f3 ♗d3! 25.♗g5 ♕xf3+ 26.♖g2 ♖f8 0-1, Jarabinsky-Postupa, cr 2014.

18...♕h4 19.f3 ♗h3!

19...♗d6? 20.♖f2+-.

20.♕h7

20.♖f2 ♗c5-+ (20...♗d6? 21.♕xa8 ♗xh2+ 22.♔xh2!+-).



TASK 4*: Time to think: 5 minutes.*

20...♗c5! 21.♗xc5 ♕g5+ 22.♔f2 ♕d2+ 23.♗e2 ♘f4!

23...d4? 24.♖ad1 ♕e3+ 25.♔e1+-.

24.♔g3

24.♖fe1 ♘d3+ 25.♔g3 ♕g5+ 26.♔xh3 ♘f4#.

24...♗xf1

24...♕xe2? 25.♖f2+-.

25.♗xf1 ♘h5+ 26.♔h3 ♖c8

26...♕g5! 27.♗d6 ♕f6! (27...♘f6?? 28.♕h4 ♕g1 29.e5 g5 30.e6+ ♔xe6 31.♖e1+) 28.♗g3 ♕xf3 29.♖c1 ♖c8 (29...♖h8 30.♕xh8 (30.♖c7+ ♔f6 31.e5+ ♔g5-+) 30...♘f4+ 31.♔h4 g5+ 32.♔xg5 ♘e6+ 33.♔h4 g5+ 34.♔h3 ♘f4#) 30.♖xc8 ♕xf1+ 31.♔h4 ♕f6+ 32.♔h3 ♕e6+ 33.♔g2 ♕xc8 34.exd5 ♕c2+ 35.♔f3 ♕d3+ 36.♔f2 ♕d2+-+; 26...♘f6 27.♕h4 g5 28.♕f2+-.

27.♗d6

27.b4 ♖xc5 (27...♕c3) 28.bxc5 ♕g5.

27...♘f6!

The drawback of 27.♗d6 is that ...♕f2 is now possible.

28.♕h4 g5 29.♕g3

29.♗f4 gxf4.

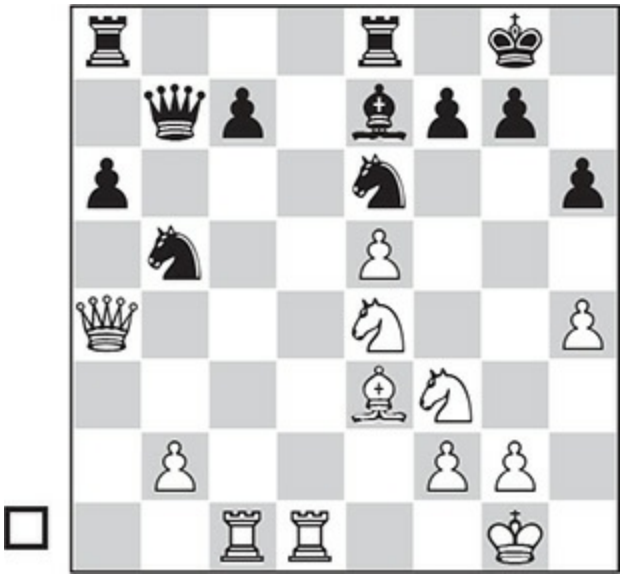
29...♖h8+

White resigned.
A nice attacking effort from Black!

Game 3 Level 3

Zoltan Almasi	2667
Victor Mikhalevski	2632

Heviz 2008



TASK 1*: Time to think: 10 minutes.*

Let us first try to assess the position before embarking on the analysis. White has completed his development, his piece coordination is better, and there is potential for an attack against Black's king. Black's pieces are scattered and not in harmony, and his queenside pawn structure is broken.

21.♘g3!

21.♘f6+!? is a very tempting continuation for White. In training at least, we should try to go as deep as possible before coming to a clear conclusion as there is no limitation of time pressure related to winning and losing or the fear of losing points. The only limitation could be our lack of motivation to improve our chess strength by investing our time, energy and effort.
Let us delve deep into the position and try to ascertain the truth to the best of our ability.

21...gxf6 is the critical continuation, of course. After 22.♕g4+, we should pause a little and realise that Black has several options or at least that his reply is not forced. Once the move we are analysing for Black is refuted subsequently, we should come back to this point and consider other possibilities for Black and refute them all. Alternatively, we can make a list and eliminate the easily-refutable moves first and then focus more effort on refuting the main line.

A) 22...♘g7? is the move that can be refuted with the least effort: 23.♗xh6 ♗f8 24.♗xg7 ♗xg7 25.exf6+-. Once we eliminate such easily-refutable moves, it makes our job easier. There will be less clutter in our mind and we will have a clear sense of direction where we should focus more;

B) 22...♔h7? can be refuted in multiple ways:

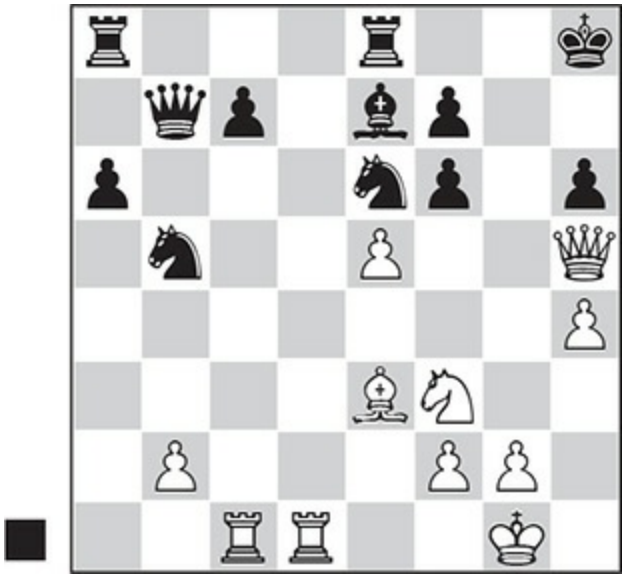
B1) 23.♕h5 ♕e4 (23...♔g8 24.♖c4+-) 24.♕xf7+ ♘g7 25.exf6; or

B2) 23.♕f5+ ♔g7 24.exf6+ ♗xf6 25.♗xh6+ ♔xh6 26.♕xf6+ ♔h7 27.♕xf7+ ♘g7 28.♖d7.

White wins easily in both cases.

C) 22...♔h8. Having eliminated the other two options for Black, we can conclude that this is the main line, and if we can refute this too, the sacrifice 21.♘f6 is winning for White. If we are not able to find a win against 22...♔h8, we should conclude that 21.♘f6 is not winning for White and look for alternatives on move 21.

C1) 23.♕h5



analysis diagram

TASK 2*: Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

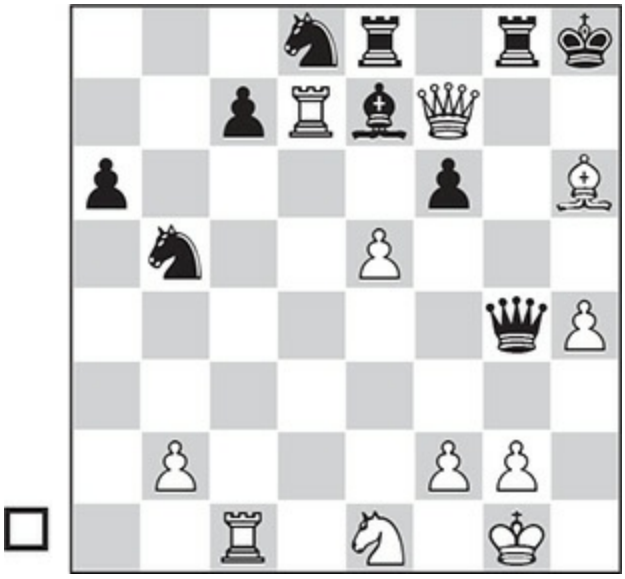
23...♕e4! 24.♕xf7 (24.exf6 ♗d6! 25.♗xh6 ♕h7⇆) and now:

C11) 24...♖g8? 25.♕xe7 ♕xf3 26.♗g5!+-, a very pretty move, refuting 24...♖g8;

C12) 24...♕f5? 25.♗xh6 ♗f8 (25...♖g8 26.♕xe7 ♕xf3 27.♗g5!+- is very similar to the variation above) 26.♗g5! ♘xg5 27.hxg5 ♖e7 (27...♕h7 28.♕xf6+ ♗g7 29.♕c6 and among other things, White has time for threats like g2-g3, ♔g2 and ♖h1; such is the dominating nature of his position) 28.♕xf6+ ♕xf6 29.gxf6 and the two pawns will soon win the game for White;

C13) 24...♕g4! and now:

C131) 25.♗xh6? ♖g8! (25...♕g8? 26.♕h5+-) 26.♘e1 ♖ae8 27.♖d7 ♘d8!? (27...♘bd4)



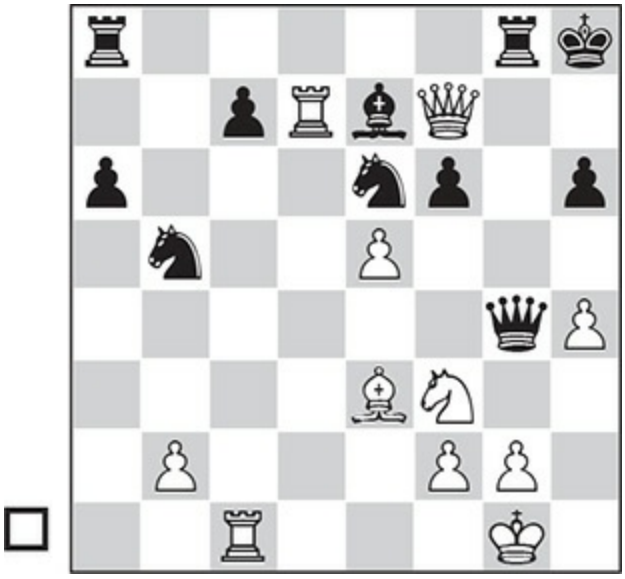
analysis diagram

TASK 3*: Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

28.♗g7+! ♕xg7 (28...♔h7!? 29.♖xd8! ♖xg7 (29...♗xd8? 30.♗xf6+ ♔h6 31.♖c6!+-) 30.♕xe8 ♗xd8 31.♕xd8 ♘d4=) 29.♕h5+ ♕h7 30.♕xh7+ ♔xh7 31.exf6∞;

C132) 25.exf6? ♘d6-+;

C133) 25.♖d7! ♖g8! (25...♘f4?? 26.♗xf4 ♕xd7 27.exf6+-)

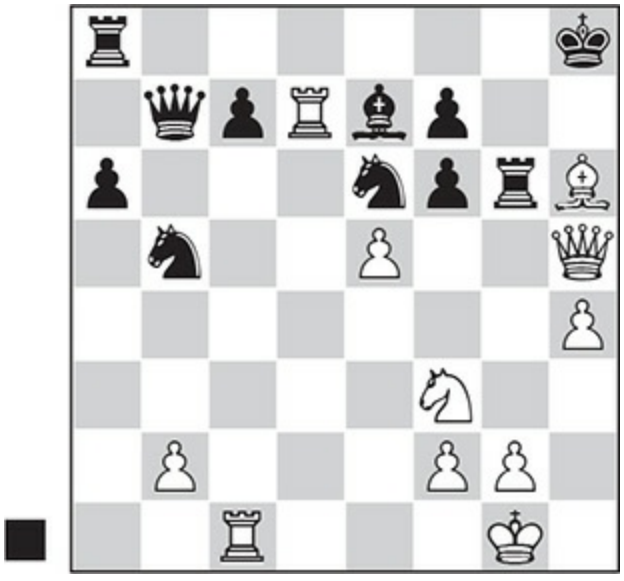


analysis diagram

TASK 4*: Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

26.♘g5! ♘xg5! (26...hxg5? 27.♖xe7 ♖g7 28.♕xf6+-) 27.♗xg5! (27.♕xe7? ♘f3+! (27...♘h3+?! 28.♔f1 ♕xg2+ 29.♔e1 ♕g1+ 30.♔d2 ♕g7 31.exf6=; not 31.♕e6?? ♕xd7+-+) 28.♔f1 ♕xg2+ 29.♔e2 ♕g6! 30.h5 ♕f5 31.♕xf6+ ♕xf6 32.exf6 ♘g5 and Black retains good winning chances) 27...♖g7 (27...♕xd7!? 28.♗xf6+ ♗xf6 29.♕xd7 ♗xe5∞) 28.♕d5 fxg5!? (28...♖ag8?? 29.exf6+-; 28...♖f8? 29.♗xh6+-; 28...hxg5!? 29.exf6 ♗xf6 30.♕xa8+ ♔h7 31.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 32.♕xa6 ♕f5∞) 29.♕xa8+ ♔h7 30.♕d5! (30.♖d3?? gxh4 31.♕d5 c5-+) 30...gxh4 31.♕d3+ (31.♖c4 ♕f5 32.♕e4=) 31...♔h8 32.♕d5=.

C2) 23.♗xh6 ♖g8 (most 2100 level students gave 23...♗f8? as the main defence when they were analysing from the initial position. They completely missed or underestimated the ...♖g8-♖g6 defensive idea; 24.♗xf8 ♖xf8 25.♖c4 will end in checkmate soon) 24.♕h5 ♖g6! (24...♕e4? 25.exf6 ♗xf6 26.♗g5++-) 25.♖d7! (White is throwing everything at Black's king; 25.♗f8+? is tempting and greedy *and* it does not work: 25...♔g8 26.♗xe7 ♖xg2+!-+)



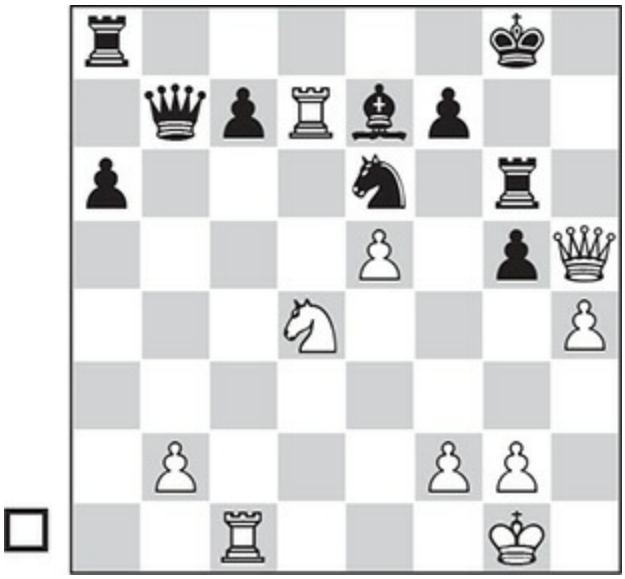
analysis diagram

TASK 5*: Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

C21) 25...♖e8? is the most obvious move and so it is wrong! One of the common bad habits most upcoming players have is their complete trust in obvious moves. Best moves are found by those who can overcome this impulsiveness. We should teach ourselves to think beyond the obvious. The learning is in the details! 26.exf6 ♗xf6 27.♖xf7;

C22) 25...♘bd4!. A fantastic defensive resource! In tough situations, it is important to not panic and lose the battle due to our emotions. We have to somehow collect our thoughts, calm ourselves and keep finding tough resources. 26.♗g5+!? (26.♖cxc7 ♕xf3; 26.♖c3∞) 26...♔g8 27.♘xd4

C221) 27...fxg5



analysis diagram

TASK 6*: Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

28.♘c6! (28.♘xe6? ♖xe6=) 28...♗f8 29.♕f3+-;

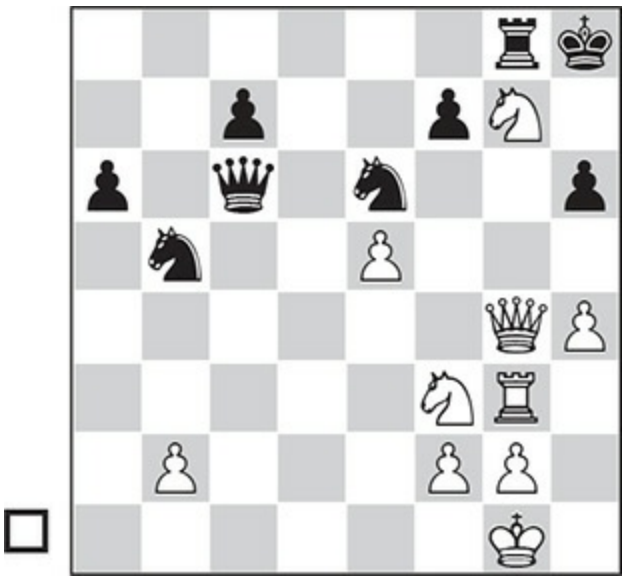
C222) 27...♘f4?? 28.♕g4+-;

C223) 27...♘xd4! 28.♖xe7 fxg5! 29.♖cxc7 ♕e4 30.♖xf7 ♘e2+ 31.♔f1! (31.♔h2? ♕xh4+∓) 31...♕b1+ 32.♔xe2 ♕e4+ (32...♕xb2+? 33.♔f3!+-) 33.♔d2 ♖d8+ 34.♖fd7! (34.♖cd7 ♕b4+=) 34...♕f4+!

35.♔e1 ♕e4+ 36.♕e2 ♕b1+=.

21...♖ed8 22.♕g4 ♔h8 23.♕h5 ♔g8 24.♖xd8+!

24.♗xh6! gxh6 (24...♖xd1+ 25.♖xd1 gxh6 26.♘f5+-) 25.♘f5 ♗f8 26.♖xd8 ♘xd8 (26...♖xd8 27.♖c4! ♘bd4 28.♘3xd4 ♘xd4 29.♘xd4+-) 27.♖c4 ♕b6 28.♖g4+ ♔h8 29.♖g3!? ♕e6 30.♕g4 (30.♘h2! ♕xe5 31.♕g4) 30...♕g6 31.♕e4 ♕c6 32.♕f4 ♘e6 33.♕g4 ♗g7 34.♘xg7 ♖g8



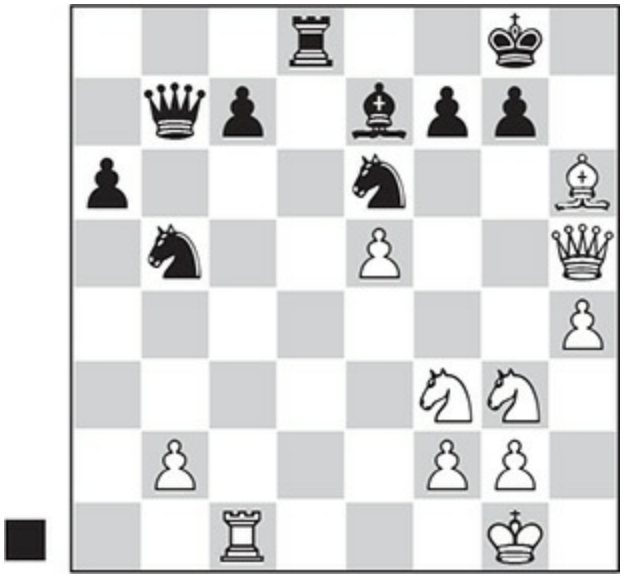
analysis diagram

TASK 7*: Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

35.♘g5! ♘xg5 (35...hxg5 36.♘xe6+-) 36.♘f5! ♕e6 37.♕f4! ♘h7 38.♖xg8+ ♔xg8 39.♕g4+ ♔f8 40.♕g7+ ♔e8 41.♕xh7+-.

24...♖xd8 25.♗xh6?

This keeps ♖c4 options open for White; 25.♘f5 ♗f8 26.♖c4!+-.



TASK 8*: Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

25...gxh6?

25...♘bd4! 26.♘xd4 ♖xd4 27.♘f5 g6! 28.♘xe7+ ♔h7 29.♕e2 ♔xh6∞.

26.♘f5

26.♖c4? ♕d5 27.♖g4+ ♔f8 28.♕xh6+ ♔e8∞.

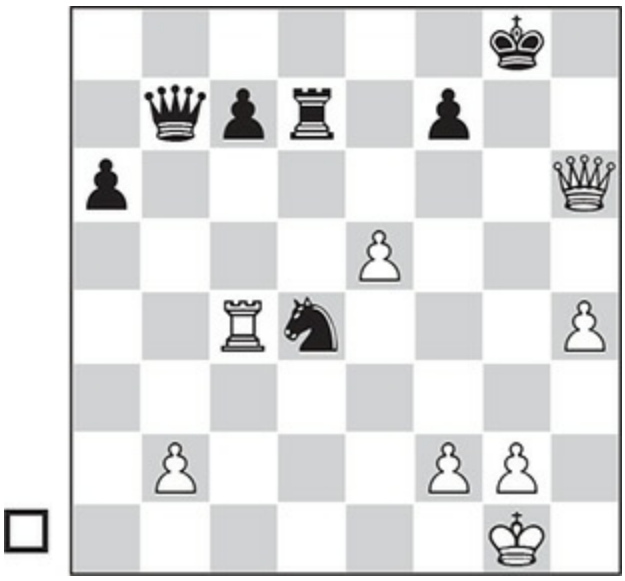
26...♗f8 27.♖c4! ♖d7

27...♘bd4 28.♘3xd4 ♘xd4 29.♘xd4 ♕e4 30.♖xc7+-.

28.♘xh6+ ♗xh6 29.♕xh6

29.♖g4+ ♗g7 30.♘g5 ♖d1+ 31.♔h2 ♗xe5+ 32.f4 ♗xf4+.

29...♘bd4 30.♘xd4 ♘xd4



TASK 9*: Time to think: 3 minutes.*

31.e6!

The finishing touch to a beautiful attacking effort from White.

31...♖d5

31...fxe6 32.♖xd4! ♖xd4 33.♕g6+ ♔f8 34.♕f6++-.

32.exf7+ ♔xf7 33.♖xc7+ 1-0

Game 4 Level 4

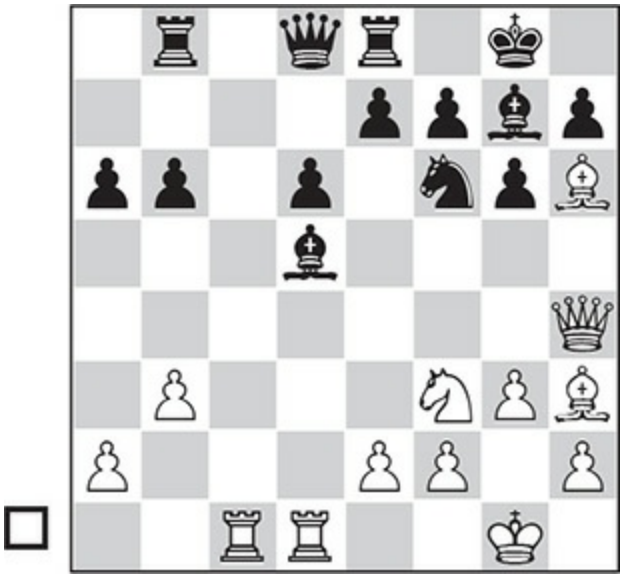
Georg Meier	2622
Thomas Koch	2461

Karlsruhe 2020 (4)

1.♘f3 c5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 b6 4.g3 ♗b7 5.♗g2 g6 6.0-0 ♗g7 7.d4 cxd4 8.♕xd4 d6 9.♖d1 ♘bd7 10.♗e3 0-0 11.♕h4 ♖c8 12.♖ac1 ♖e8?! 13.b3 a6 14.♗h3 ♖b8 15.♘d5 ♘xd5 16.cxd5 ♘f6 17.♗h6!± ♗xd5?!

A) 17...b5!? is probably the best for Black: 18.e4 ♕a5 19.♘d4 ♕xa2 20.♗xg7 ♔xg7 21.♕f4 ♕a5 22.g4! h6 23.g5 hxg5 24.♕xg5?! ♖h8 25.♘f5+ ♔f8 26.♘xe7 ♘e8 27.♗c8! ♗xc8 28.♘xc8 ♕b4! 29.♕e3 ♖h4;

B) 17...♘xd5? 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.♖xd5 ♗xd5 20.♕d4+.



TASK 1*: Find the best continuation for White. Time to think: 10 minutes.*

18.♘g5!

18.♖xd5!? is very tempting, but with correct play, Black can reach a position where his defensive chances are not worse: 18...♘xd5 and now:

A) Some students fell for 19.♗e6?? ♗f6!;

B) And others for 19.♘g5? ♗f6!-+ (19...♘f6? 20.♗xg7 ♔xg7 21.♗e6);

C) 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.♗e6! (20.♘g5 h6-+) 20...♘f6 (20...fxe6 21.♘g5 – Black cannot defend against both the threats – 21...♕d7 22.♕xh7+ ♔f6 23.♘e4+ ♔e5 24.f4+ ♔d4 25.♖c4+ ♔e3 26.♕h3+-; 20...h6 21.♗xd5±) 21.♘g5 ♖f8 22.♗xf7 ♕d7! 23.♖c7! ♕g4 24.♖xe7 ♕xh4 25.gxh4 ♔h8 26.♗e6 (26.e4 h6 27.♘e6 ♖fc8 28.♗xg6 ♖g8 29.h5 ♖be8 30.♖xe8 ♘xe8) 26...d5! (26...♖be8 27.♖a7±) 27.a4! ♖fe8 (27...b5 28.a5 ♖be8 29.♖a7+-) 28.♖f7 h6 29.♖xf6 hxg5 30.hxg5 ♔g7±.

18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.♖xd5 ♘xd5 20.♗e6 ♘f6 21.♘g5 ♖f8 22.♗xf7 ♕d7 transposes.

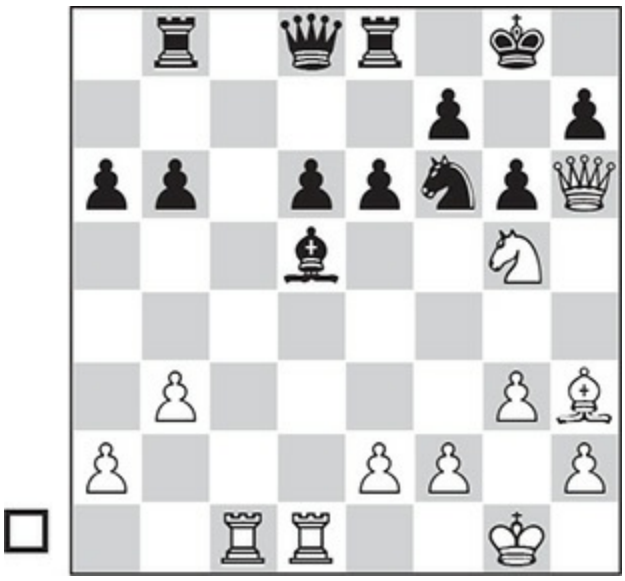
18...♗b7?

This does not put up a good fight.

A) 18...♗h8 19.♖xd5 ♘xd5 20.♗g7+-;

B) 18...e6? 19.♗xg7! ♔xg7 20.e4! ♗a8 (20...h6 21.♘xf7) 21.e5+-;

C) 18...♗xh6! is the best practical defence: 19.♕xh6 e6



analysis diagram

TASK 2*: How best to continue the attack? Time to think: 10 minutes.*

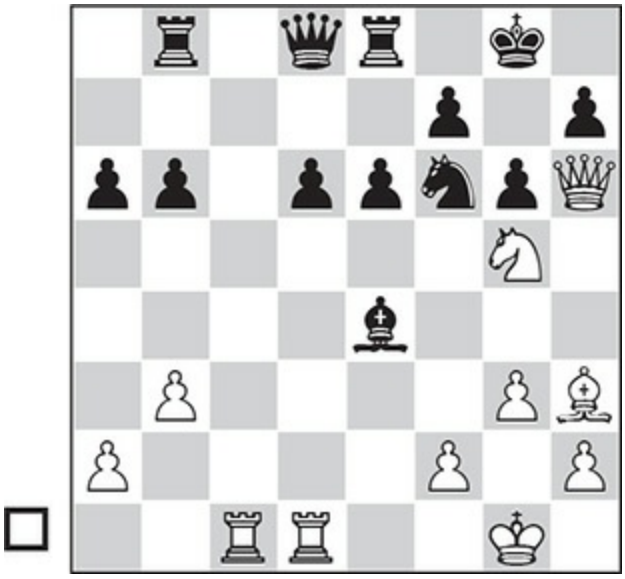
C1) 20.♖d4!? ♖c8! (before putting up a second-rank defence, Black manages to get control of the c-file) 21.♖cd1 (21.♖xc8?! ♕xc8 22.♘xh7 ♘xh7 23.♖xd5 ♖d8∞) 21...♕e7

C11) 22.♖f4?! ♖c5! (22...♖c2?! 23.e4 ♗c6 24.♗f1! e5 25.♖f3± ; not 25.♖h4 ♕f8∞) 23.e4 (23.♖h4!? ♕f8 24.♘xh7 ♕g7! 25.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 26.♗g2±) 23...♗c6 24.♖h4 (the merits of having a rook on h4 are obvious, but the downside is that the white queen can't really go back) 24...♕f8∞;

C12) 22.e4? ♗b7 23.e5 dxe5 24.♖d7 ♖cd8-+;

C13) 22.♖h4 ♕f8 23.♘xh7 ♕xh6 (23...♕g7? 24.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 25.♖xd5 exd5 26.♗xc8 ♖xc8 27.♕h7+ ♔f8 28.♕h8++-) 24.♘xf6+ ♔g7 25.♘xe8+ ♖xe8 26.♖xh6 ♔xh6 27.♗g2 (27.e4 ♗xe4 28.♖xd6 ♖c8∞) 27...♗xg2 28.♔xg2 d5 29.♖c1± is probably the best White can get when going for 20.♖d4.

C2) 20.e4! ♗xe4!



analysis diagram

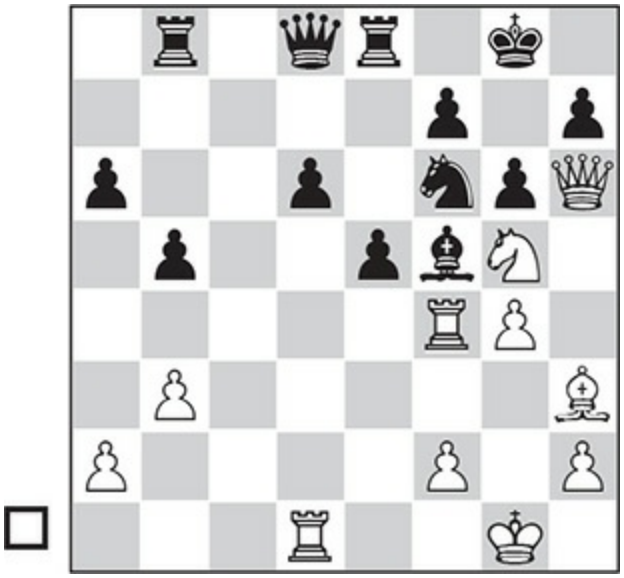
TASK 3*: Time to think: 5 minutes.*

21.♖c4! (in this manner, White gains a crucial tempo to get the rook to the fourth rank) 21...♗f5! (21...d5? 22.♖xe4!) 22.g4! (22.♖h4? ♗xh3 23.♖xh3 e5 (23...♕e7 24.♘xh7 ♘g4 25.♕f4! f5 26.♘g5 e5 27.♕c4++-) 24.♘xh7 (24.♖h4 ♖c8) 24...♘g4! 25.♕d2 (25.♕h4 ♕xh4) 25...♔g7 26.♖h4∞) 22...b5!? and now:

C21) 23.gxf5? bxc4 24.fxe6 fxe6 25.♗xe6+ ♖xe6 26.♘xe6 ♕e7 27.♖xd6 c3! 28.♖c6 ♘d5!-+;

C22) 23.♖cd4!? ♗c2 24.♖1d2 ♗b1 25.♖xd6 ♕c8 26.♖d1 (26.♘xf7 ♘e4!? 27.♘g5 ♖b7 28.♘xe4 ♗xe4∞) 26...♗e4 (26...♗c2? 27.♖d7 ♖b7 28.♘xe6!+-) 27.♖d7 ♕c2∞ 28.♖1d2 ♕c1+ 29.♗f1 ♖b7!=;

C23) 23.♖f4!. Suddenly, not only should the black bishop worry about its safety, but the black queen becomes overloaded to defend the d6-pawn and the f6-knight: 23...e5 (23...♗c2? 24.♖xd6 ♕xd6 25.♖xf6 ♕d1+ 26.♔g2 ♕d5+ 27.♖f3!+-)



analysis diagram

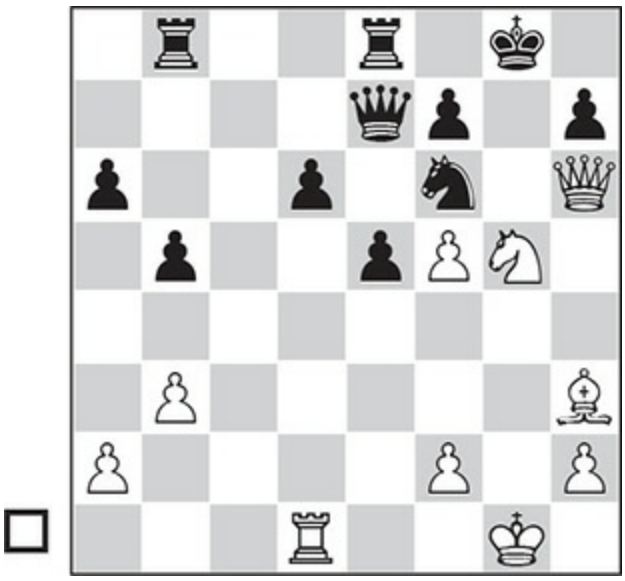
TASK 4*: Find and analyse the best continuation for White in detail. Time to think: 10 minutes.*

C231) 24.♖f3? ♗c2 25.♖d2 e4! 26.♖xf6 ♕xf6 27.♖xc2 ♖e5 28.♕xh7+ ♔f8 29.♕h6+ (29.♘xf7? ♖e7! 30.♘g5 ♕a1+!-+) 29...♔g8=;

C232) 24.gxf5 exf4 25.♗g2 ♕c8-+;

C233) 24.♘xf7 ♔xf7 25.♖f3 e4-+;

C234) 24.♖xf5!. The next wave of attack begins: 24...gxf5 25.gxf5 ♕e7 (if 25...♖b7, 26.♖d3! (26.♔h1? ♔h8∞) is the correct way to bring the rook to the g-file. The other way does not work, as can be seen in the analysis that follows: 26...♔h8 27.♗g2! (gaining a critical tempo to clear the third rank for the white rook due to the undefended position of the black rook) 27...♖c7 28.♖h3 ♖c1+ 29.♗f1 ♖g8 30.♕xh7+! ♘xh7 31.♖xh7#)



analysis diagram

TASK 5*: Time to think: 5 minutes.*

26.♔h1! (his majesty vacates the g-file for the rook; now 26.♖d3? ♔h8 27.♗g2 does not come with gain of tempo, and so bringing the white rook to the g-file via the third rank does not work here anymore: 27...♖g8-+) 26...♔h8 27.♖xd6! (White changes plans and exploits the lack of support for the f7-pawn – this is the drawback of ...♔h8) 27...♖g8! 28.♖xf6. White looks completely winning, but there is still some juice in the position: 28...♖xg5!? 29.♕xg5 ♖d8! (29...♖g8 30.♕h6+-; 29...♖c8? 30.♕h6+-)

C2341) 30.♖g6? ♕b7+ 31.♔g1 ♖d1+ 32.♗f1 fxg6-+;

C2342) 30.♗g4? ♖d6;

C2343) 30.♕h4? ♖d1+ (30...♕b7+!? 31.♔g1 ♕f3!= – 31...♖g8+? 32.♗g4+-) 31.♗f1 (31.♔g2? ♕b7+ 32.f3 ♕c7! 33.♕f2 ♕d8!-+) 31...♖xf1+ 32.♔g2 ♖e1∞;

C2344) 30.♕h6!? ♕d7! 31.♕c1 ♕d5+ 32.♗g2 (32.♔g1? ♖g8+-+) 32...♕d1+ 33.♕xd1 ♖xd1+ 34.♗f1 ♖xf1+ 35.♔g2 ♖a1 36.♖xa6 ♔g7±; White can try to bring the king up and go for a win, but there is something better;

C2345) 30.♗f1! ♖d1 (30...♖d6? 31.♖g6! ♕b7+ 32.♕g2!+-)

analysis diagram

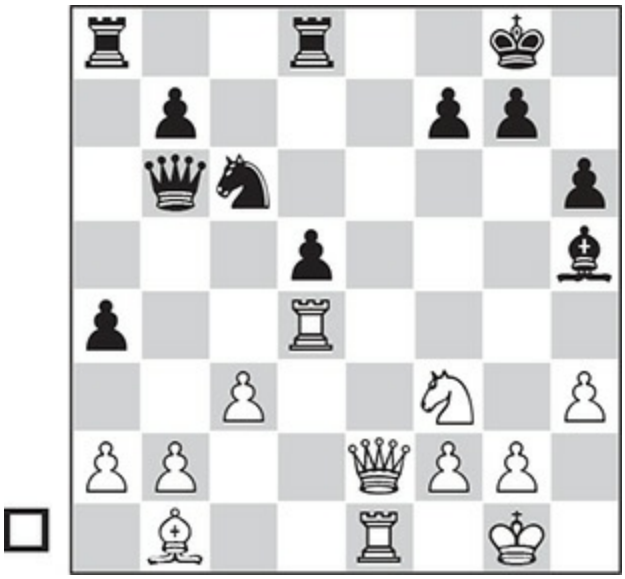
TASK 6*: Find the best continuation for White. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

31.h4!. Finally the rook on f6 is free to move around. (31.♔g1? ♖d6!-+ 32.♖g6 ♖xg6; 31.♕h6? ♕b4!= 32.♕h3 ♕f4!) 31...♖xf1+ 32.♔g2 ♖a1 33.♖c6 ♕xg5+ 34.hxg5 ♖xa2 35.f6 h6 36.g6!+-.
19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.♗e6! ♖f8 21.♗xf7 ♗c8
21...♕d7 22.♗e6.
22.♘e6+ ♗xe6 23.♗xe6+-
We will pay more attention to this concept in our subsequent books.

3. Tactics

This is the ability to sacrifice material to reach a higher objective. We will see many positions in this book that will involve a sacrifice of material. Many positional players are afraid to sacrifice material if the outcome is not clearly and visibly in their favour. They end up becoming players who mainly value positional factors higher than dynamic factors. Most of the positions in this book will involve all kinds of tactical themes.

Game 5 Level 1
Anatoly Karpov
Rafael Vaganian



TASK 1*: Find a forced win for White. Time to think: 2 minutes.*

20.♖xd5!

20.♖xa4! ♗xf3 21.gxf3 also wins for White.

The text move wins a pawn as

20...♖xd5

(20...♗xf3 21.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 22.♕e8++-, or 21...♕xd8 22.♕xf3+-) allows:

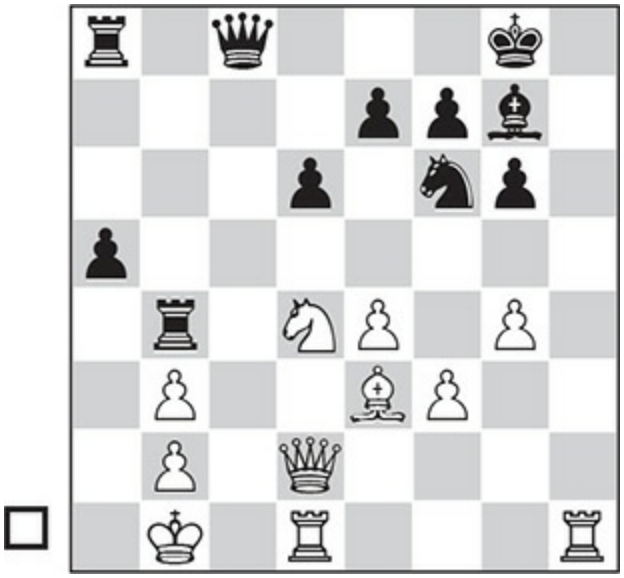
21.♕e8+

And White wins.

Game 6 Level 2

Ramesh RB	2450
Ponnuswamy Konguvel	2377

Biel 2000 (10)



TASK 1*: Find a strong continuation for White. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

25.♘f5! gxf5 26.♗h6!

White is threatening to take on g7 and play ♕h6+, along with the threat of opening the g-file with gxf5. Black's king is suddenly undefendable. The rest of the game simply validates this.

26.gxf5!, opening the g-file first, is another good way leading to similar ideas: 26...♘xe4 27.fxe4 ♕b7 28.♖h4! ♖xe4 29.♕g2 ♖b4 30.♕xb7 ♖xb7 31.♖g1+-.

26...♘xe4!

26...♘e8 27.♗xg7 ♘xg7 28.♕h6 f6 29.gxf5+-; 26...♕f8 27.♗xg7 ♕xg7 28.gxf5+-.

27.fxe4 f4

27...♕e6 28.♗xg7 (28.gxf5?? ♕xe4+ 29.♔a2 a4) 28...♔xg7 29.gxf5 ♕xe4+ 30.♔a2. White's king is safer than Black's, and with minor pieces alone on the board, this is decisive!

28.♗xg7 ♕e6

28...♔xg7 29.♕h2 ♕h8 30.♕xf4.

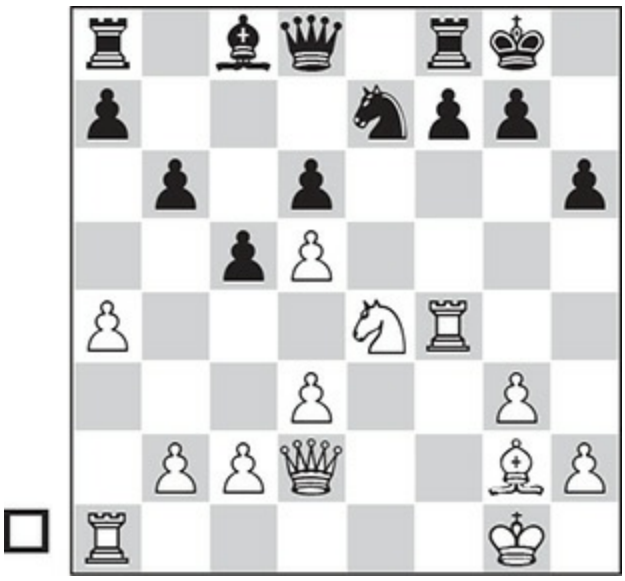
29.♗c3 ♕xe4+ 30.♕d3 1-0

Game 7 Level 3

Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa 2567

Antoni Kozak 2354

Mumbai jr 2019 (2)



TASK 1: *Please try not to get carried away after finding White's first move. The analysis that follows is very important as well. The more we can expect from ourselves, the more the chances we can meet them! Time to think: 8 to 10 minutes.*

17.♖f6! ♘f5

17...♗f5 18.♖xd6 ♕b8 (18...♕c7 19.♖xh6!, threatening 20.d6) 19.♕f4±.

18.g4!?

18.♖f1! is the most principled move, but White should have seen the next critical move as well: 18...gxf6 19.♗h3! (the most important move, but correct evaluation is also necessary. Ideally this should have been found while thinking about this position initially) 19...♘xg3 (19...♘d4 20.♕xh6+-; 19...♖e8 20.♗xf5 ♗xf5 21.♖xf5+-) 20.hxg3 ♗xh3 21.♖xf6+-.

18...gxf6 19.gxf5 ♔g7 20.♘g3

20.♗h3 or 20.♕f4 would have kept the pressure and the advantage alive as well.

20...♔h7 21.♔h1?!

21.♘h5! ♗xf5 (21...♖g8 22.h4!, with complete domination. This move is essential as Black was threatening to play ...♖g5 next) 22.♖f1 ♗g6

23.♘xf6+ ♔g7 24.♕c3!+-.

21...♖g8⇆

The worst is beyond Black, but Pragg eventually won the game after mutual mistakes.

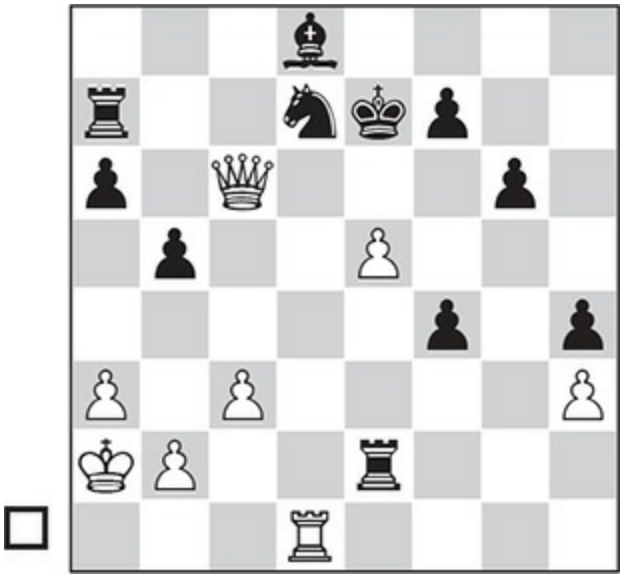
4. Forcing moves

By forcing moves I mean checks, captures, threats and pawn breaks. We will see around nineteen examples in Chapter 4 and five examples in Chapter 5 to emphasise the need to see forcing moves in our analytical process.

Game 8 Level 1

Sergei Movsesian	2732
Vasily Ivanchuk	2786

Nanjing 2008 (9)



TASK 1*: Find a forced draw for White. Time to think: 3 minutes.*

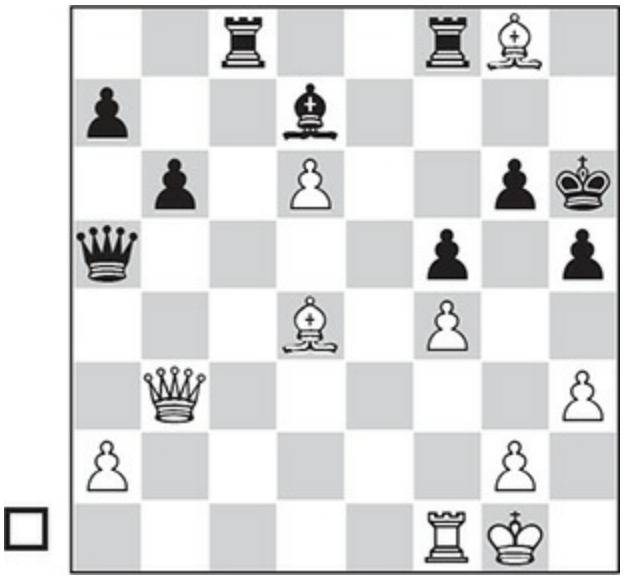
32.♖xd7+!

Black's rook and two minor pieces outweigh the queen. This means White has to act quickly before Black manages to co-ordinate his pieces better and turn the game over to White in the long run.

32...♖xd7 33.♕f6+ ♔e8 34.♕h8+ ♔e7 35.♕f6+ ½-½

This ends the game immediately. In a slightly worse positions, it's important not to prolong the game unnecessarily with drifting moves. We should be very concrete and end the game quickly wherever possible. Many half points are lost due to drifting by playing aimless moves.

Game 9 Level 1
Marcin Dziuba 2556
Alexander Ipatov 2494
Moscow 2009



TASK 1*: White to play and win. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

30.♕g3!
White does not attach too much importance to keeping material parity and instead goes for an all-out attack.
30...♖xg8 31.♕g5+ ♔h7 32.♕e7+ ♔h6

33.♗f6!

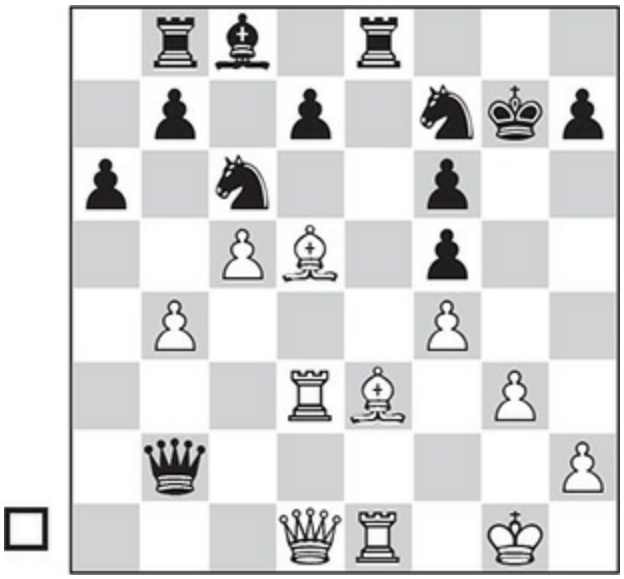
Including new units into the scene of action.

33...g5 34.♗xg5+ ♖xg5 35.fxg5+ ♔g6 36.♕f6+ ♔h7 37.♕f7+ ♔h8 38.g6 ♕c5+ 39.♔h1 1-0

Game 10 Level 1

Slavisa Brenjo	2491
Igor Miladinovic	2607

Vrsac ch-SRB 2007 (2)



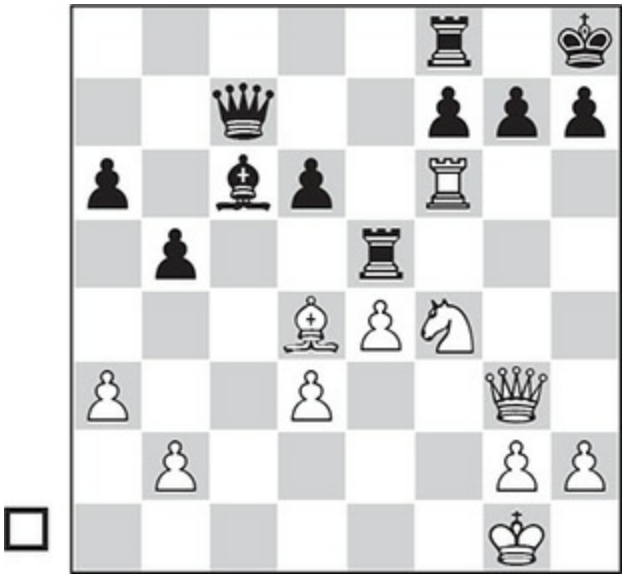
TASK 1*: Find the win for White. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

27.♗xf7 ♔xf7 28.♕h5+ ♔f8 29.♕xe8+ ♔xe8 30.♗d4+
And Black wins.
This position arose in the analysis of the above-mentioned game. Another minor point is that all moves were forcing moves!

Game 11 Level 2

Ramesh RB	2415
Rahul Shetty	2390

Kasaragod 1996 (13)



TASK 1*: Find the forced winning continuation for White. Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

25.♗xe5 dxe5 26.♘e6! ♕a7+!
26...♕b6+ 27.♔h1+-.
27.♕f2!
It's very important to find this move as well.
27.♔h1? ♖g8! (this defensive resource for the opponent should be found while analysing the initial position) 28.♖h6! fxe6 29.♖xh7+ ♔xh7 30.♕h3+ ♔g6 31.♕xe6+=; 27.♖f2?? fxe6-+; 27.♔f1? ♖g8 28.♖h6 fxe6

29.♖xh7+=.

27...♕e7

This defensive resource for the opponent should be found while analysing the initial position.

27...♕xf2+ 28.♖xf2 ♖e8 29.♖xf7 ♔g8 30.♘g5 h6 31.♖c7+-.

28.♘xg7!

This resource should also be found while analysing the initial position.

28...♗xe4

28...♔xg7 29.♖xc6+-.

29.dxe4

29.♘e6? ♖c8 30.h4!∞.

29...♔xg7 30.♖xa6

Ideally we should come until this point while analysing the initial position, as most if not all the moves were forcing moves.

30...♖d8 31.h3 ♖d6 32.♖a5 ♖f6 33.♕e2 ♕c5+ 34.♔h2 ♕c1 35.♖xb5 ♖f1 36.♕g4+ ♔f8 37.♖b8+ ♔e7 38.♕h4+ ♔e6 39.♖e8+ 1-0

In this example, the player is expected to find the following critical moves while analysing the initial position: 27.♕f2!, 27...♕e7!, 27...♖g8! and 28.♘g7!.

Only by finding all the important moves for both sides and getting the whole solution correctly can we make real progress in our analytical skills. Missing

these critical moves is a sign that either our effort is lacking or our concentration is not good enough. Try harder in the next position when such misses happen.

5. Active defence

When something is under attack, most upcoming players and positional players tend to automatically play defensive moves without much thought or hesitation. I always tell my students to avoid playing defensive moves to the extent possible, or at least to try to delay playing defensive moves if it is impossible to avoid them altogether.

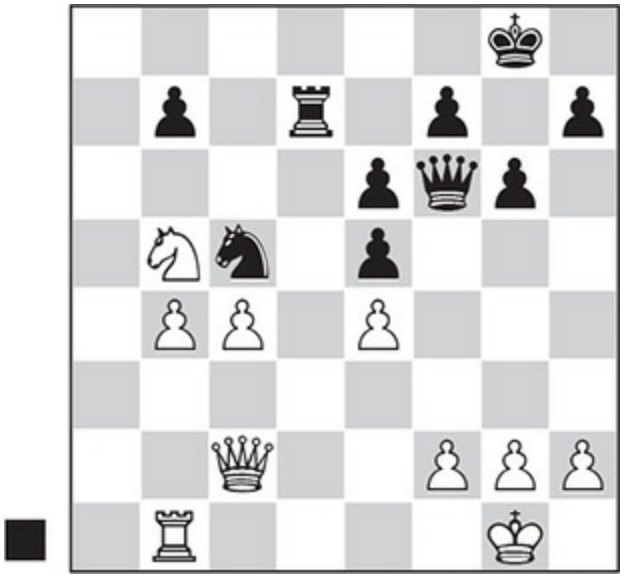
The reason is that when we play defensive moves, our position can become passive, or we may hand over the initiative to our opponent, or we will lose precious time in the process. The better alternative is to look for a continuation that will give us active counterplay. This could mean that we may have to employ tactical means or sacrifice material for long-term compensation.

Game 12 Level 1

David Recuero Guerra 2492

Vugar Gashimov 2740

Lugo 2009 (2)



TASK 1*: Find a strong continuation for Black. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

26...♕f4!

Through such examples, we should learn the importance of not playing automatic defensive moves whenever something is under attack. As the wise say, counter-attack is the best defence in chess in most positions. Gashimov was one of my favourite players. I had the honour of staying in the same hotel during a tournament in Spain many years ago. We both were the only players who had arrived a few days in advance. I invited him to my room, where he played bullet games online on my laptop! I struggle to play bullet games with a mouse even now with a good internet connection, but back then, Gashimov was at the very top in bullet ratings and playing with a keyboard! He shared many interesting events from his young life, which were very moving. Mother earth took him away from us prematurely. Such a great human being...

27.bxc5?!

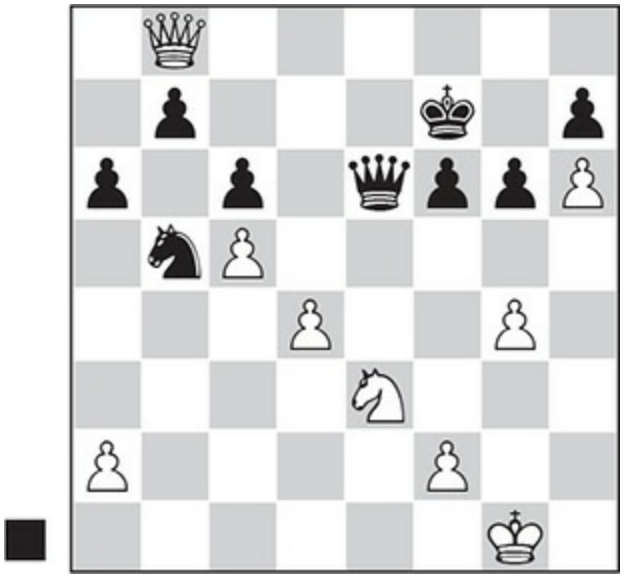
27.g3! ♕xe4 28.♕xe4 ♘xe4. Black will confidently play for a win with the extra pawn.

27...♖d2! 28.♕xd2 ♕xd2 0-1

Game 13 Level 2

Ian Nepomniachtchi	2774
Wang Hao	2762

Yekaterinburg 2020 (5)



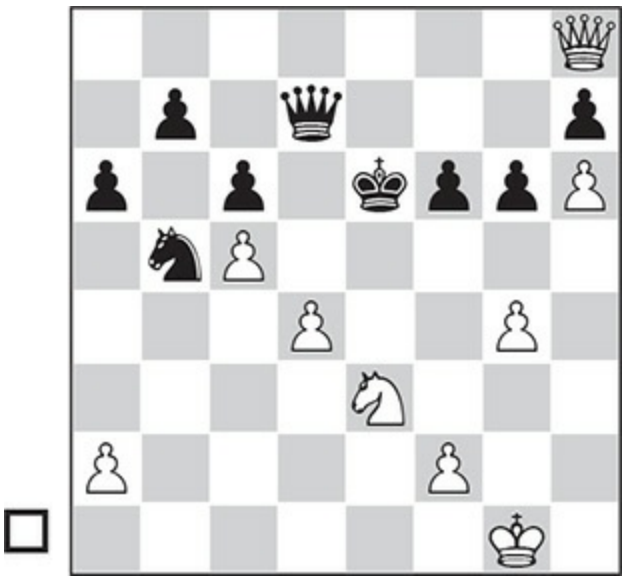
TASK 1*: How can Black defend in this apparently worse position? Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

32...♕d7?

Black thought his position was already undefendable. What is interesting here is that Black can save the game in two different ways. We can see the impact our frame of mind has in how we look at things and how it affects our decision-making ability.

32...♘xd4! 33.♕xb7+ ♕e7 34.♕xa6 ♕e4!⇆ (34...♕xc5 is also good enough to keep the balance) 35.♕b7+ ♔e8 36.♕xh7 ♘f3+ (36...♘e2+ 37.♔f1 ♘g3+) 37.♔f1 ♘d4=; 32...♕e7! 33.♕h8 ♔e6=.

33.♕h8 ♔e6



34.f4!

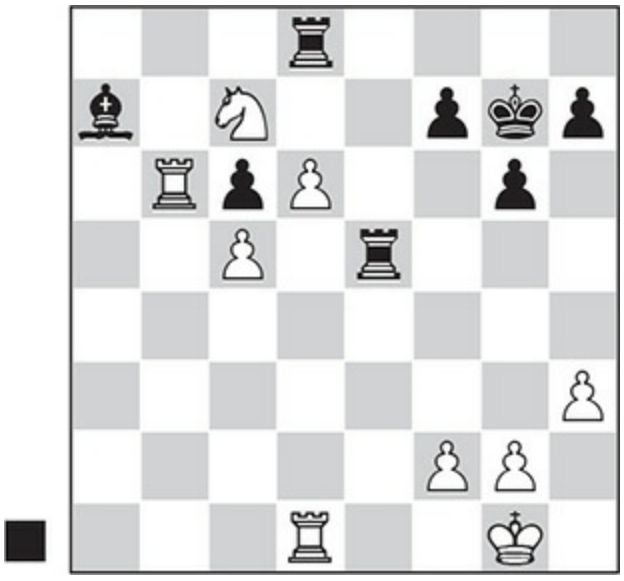
A fantastic move, and White won quickly:

34...♘xd4 35.♕g8+ ♔f7 36.♕c8+ ♔d7 37.♕g8+ ♔f7 38.♕d8 ♔d7 39.f5+ gxf5 40.gxf5+ ♘xf5 41.♕xd7+ ♔xd7 42.♘xf5 ♔e6 43.♘e3 1-0

Game 14 Level 4

Manuel Petrosyan	2590
SP Sethuraman	2641

Moscow 2020 (5)



TASK 1*: How can Black defend this position? Time to think: 10 to 15 minutes.*

36...♔f6?? 37.♖xc6 ♖xc5 38.♖a6 ♗b8 39.♘e8+ ♔e6 40.♖e1+ ♖e5 41.♘c7++- was the game continuation. Black missed a tough- to find opportunity to save the game here, most likely due to lack of time:

36...♗xb6! 37.cxb6 c5!

White needs a few moves to combine his pieces to aid the advance of his passed pawns. Black must use this time effectively to create his own counterplay. The c-pawn is his counterplay, as it will distract White's pieces from coordinating well.

A) 37...♖e2?? 38.♖b1! ♖b8 39.d7 ♖d2 40.♘a6! ♖b7 41.♘c5 ♖b8 42.b7+-; a beautiful knight!;

B) Not 37...♖d5?? 38.♘xd5 ♖xd6 39.♘e3+- or 37...♖e4? 38.♖b1 c5 (with the idea ...♖b4) 39.♘a6!+-;

C) According to the engines, 37...♖a5! also does the job for Black. But the moves are not very obvious and hard to find. Almost all the students I gave this position to solve found the other solution. Hence, I will focus on that move.

After 37...♖a5 we have:

C1) 38.♖b1 ♔f6! – only move – 39.f4 ♖a2 40.b7 ♖b8. The knight is not able to come out and aid the pawns. The d-pawn advance will be met with Black's king approaching it: 41.g4. In this way, White tries to drive the black king away from the d-pawn so that it can be advanced: 41...♖a4 42.g5+ ♔f5 43.d7 ♔xf4! 44.♖d1 ♖d8=. Black will give up the rook on the eighth rank for both passed pawns and draw with the remaining pawns on the kingside;

C2) 38.♖e1!? ♖a2 39.♖e8 ♖xe8 40.♘xe8+ ♔f8 41.♘f6 ♖b2=.

38.b7

38.d7 c4.

38...c4!

By just advancing his c-pawn, Black creates new problems for White to solve and escapes with a draw in the process. 38...♖e4?? 39.♘a6+-.

39.♖b1

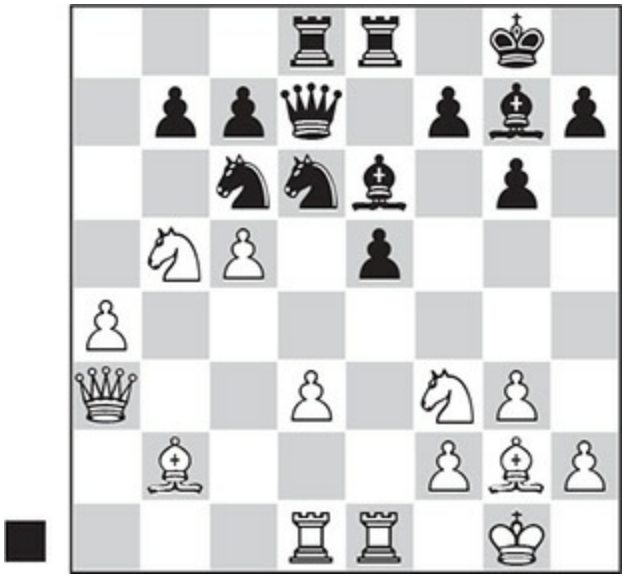
39.♘a6 ♖b5=.

39...c3 40.d7 c2 41.♖c1 ♖c5 42.♘a6 ♖b5 43.b8♕ ♖bxb8 44.♘xb8 ♖xb8 45.♖xc2 ♖d8 46.♖c7 ♔f6=

Game 15 Level 4

Abhimanyu Puranik	2597
Sanan Sjugirov	2674

Moscow 2020 (5)



The position has just begun to get interesting. In the ensuing complications, both players lost their way and made mistakes. Let's try to avoid them in our analysis!

TASK 1*: Find Black's main continuation and analyse the consequences. Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

21...♘c4! 22.dxc4 ♕xd1 23.♘xc7!

This defensive resource for White should be found in our analysis for sure. 23.♘d6? ♖xd6 24.cxd6 ♕xd6∓.

23...e4! 24.♘xe8

24.♗xg7 leads to an unclear position as well: 24...exf3 25.♕c3 ♖e7 26.♗xf3 ♕d2 27.♘xe6 fxe6 28.♕xd2 ♖xd2 29.♗f6 ♖e8 30.♖b1 ♖f8 31.♗g5 ♖a2 32.♗g4 ♖fxf2∞ should end in a draw with correct play!

24...exf3 25.♗c3??

White's first major mistake.

Necessary was 25.♖xd1! ♖xd1+ 26.♗f1, though at first glance it looks very scary as Black has two possible ways to exploit the pin. But with careful attention, we realise that White can handle the same threat in two different ways by one defensive idea: ♕a1!. Here we see that the correct move 25.♖d1 went out of White's list because of the mistake made in the subsequent analysis: 26...♗xc4 (26...♗h3 27.♕a1! (Karthikeyan) 27...♖xa1 (27...♖xf1+ 28.♕xf1 ♗xf1 29.♗xg7=) 28.♗xa1 ♗xf1 29.♗xg7 ♗xc4 30.♗c3=) 27.♕a1!. This resource saves the game for White: 27...♖xa1 (27...♖xf1+ 28.♕xf1 ♗xf1 29.♗xg7 ♗e2) 28.♗xa1 ♗xf1 29.♗xg7 should end in a draw eventually.

25.♕a1?? ♕xa1-+.

25...♖d3??

Now it is Black's turn to return the compliment with this blunder. Black could have won the game in two different ways but missed both. This is a common problem during a practical game; we are faced with many alternatives, everything looks good, one idea is no less attractive than the other. At such moments, having a choice between several good options, even very strong players can sometimes lose their way, especially when time is also a factor. Even though time-trouble probably did not play a major role in this position, it just goes to show the practical risk in handling such positions and the need for us to be alert during such moments.

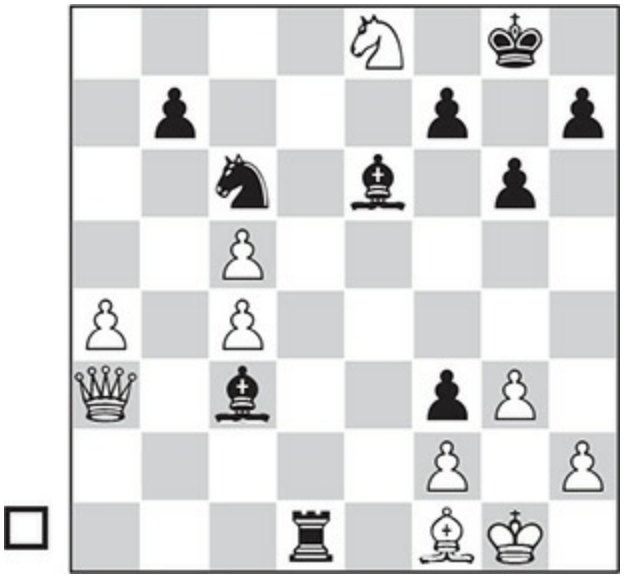
A) 25...♗xc3! 26.♕xc3 ♕d4!-+ (26...♘d4? 27.♘f6+=) 27.♘f6+ ♔g7 and White will lose material;

B) 25...♘d4! 26.♗f1 ♘c2! (26...♘e2+?? 27.♗xe2 fxe2 28.♘xg7+-) 27.♖xd1 ♖xd1 28.♕b3 ♗h3-+;

C) 25...♕xe1+?? 26.♗xe1 ♖d1 27.♗xf3+-.

26.♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 27.♗f1 ♗xc3

27...♗xc4 28.♕a1=.



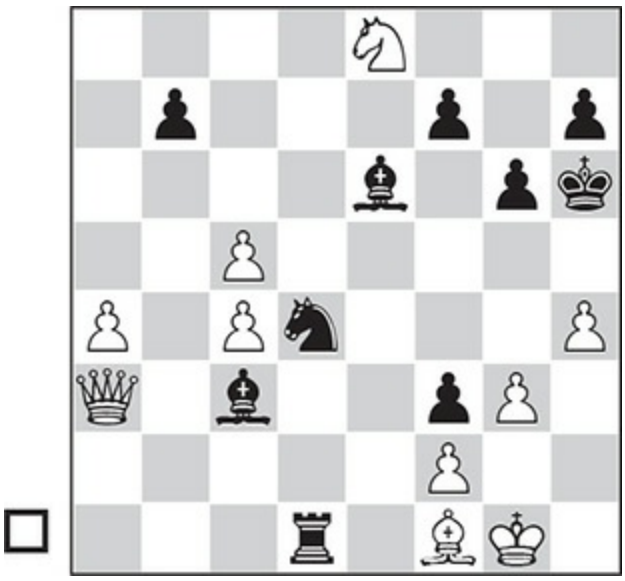
TASK 2*: Find the defence for White. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

28.♕b3??

Three big mistakes in the space of four moves. This goes to show the necessity for enhancing our ability to handle pressure. Both h-pawn pushes would have saved the game:

A) 28.h3! ♘d4 (28...♗xc4 29.♕xc3 ♖xf1+ 30.♔h2 ♖xf2+=) 29.♘f6+! (29.♔h2 ♖xf1 30.♘f6+ ♔g7 31.♘e8+ ♔h6 32.♕xc3 ♖xf2+=) 29...♔g7! 30.♘e8+ ♔h6 31.c6! ♘e2+ 32.♔h2 ♖xf1 33.♕f8+ ♔h5 34.♕c5+! g5 35.h4 h6 36.♕e3! ♗g4 37.cxb7 ♖g1 38.b8♕ ♖g2+=;

B) 28.h4! ♘d4 (28...♗xc4? 29.♕xc3 ♖xf1+ 30.♔h2 ♖xf2+ 31.♔h3 ♗e6+ 32.g4+-) 29.♘f6+ (29.♔h2 ♖xf1 30.♕xc3 ♖xf2+ 31.♔h1 ♖f1+=) 29...♔g7 (29...♔h8?? 30.c6+-) 30.♘e8+= ♔h6??



analysis diagram

TASK 3*: Find the win for White. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

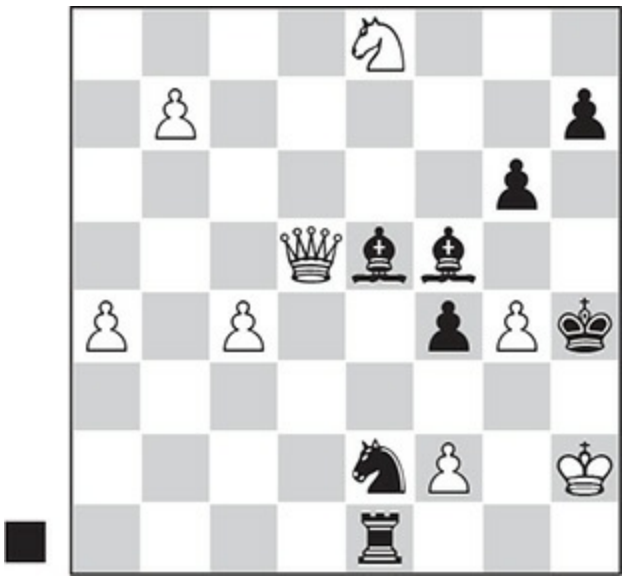
31.c6! ♘e2+ 32.♔h2 ♖xf1 33.♕f8+ ♔h5 34.♕c5+! f5 35.♕e3! (35.cxb7? ♖g1!=; 35...♗d4? 36.♕xd4 ♘xd4 37.♘f6+ ♔h6 38.b8♕ ♖xf2+ 39.♔h3+-) 35...f4 36.♕xf3+ (36.♕c5+? ♗f5-+) 36...♗g4 37.♕d5+ ♗f5 38.g4+ (38.♕g2!) 38...♔xh4! (38...♔xg4? 39.♕g2+ ♔xh4 40.♕xf1 f3 41.c7 ♗e5+ 42.♔h1+-; 38...♔h6? 39.gxf5 ♖xf2+ 40.♔h3+-) 39.♕g2!

B1) 39...♖e1? and now:

B11) 40.gxf5? f3! 41.♕h3+ ♔g5 42.♕xf3 ♗e5+ 43.♔g2 ♘f4+=;

B12) 40.f3? ♘g3-+. Karthikeyan thought Black's bishop was on b2 here and said ♕b2 was winning;

B13) 40.cxb7? ♗e5 41.♕d5



TASK 4*: Time to think: 5 minutes.*

41...♖f1! (Aravindh; 41...♘d4? 42.gxf5 f3+ 43.♕xe5+-) 42.♕xe5 ♖xf2+ 43.♔h1 ♔g3-+;

B14) 40.♘d6? ♗xg4 41.c7 ♖g1 (41...h5? (Pragg) 42.♘f7! ♗f6 43.c8♕! (43.f3? (Pragg) 43...♘g3! 44.fxg4 ♘f1+ 45.♕xf1 ♖xf1 46.c8♕ ♖f2+ 47.♔g1 ♔g3 48.♘d6 ♖g2+ 49.♔f1 ♖f2+ 50.♔e1 ♗c3+ 51.♔d1 ♖d2+ 52.♔c1 ♖xd6= Karthikeyan) 43...♗xc8 44.♕xg6 ♗e7 45.♕e4! (Aravindh) 45...♗f6 46.♘e5 ♗g4 47.♕d5!+- Aravindh) 42.♕e4 f3 43.♕e7+ ♗f6! 44.♕xf6+ ♔h5 45.♕e5+ g5 46.♕h8 ♖g2+=;

B15) 40.♕h3+! ♔g5 41.♘d6! (this is why 39....♖d1 is correct) 41...♗xg4 42.♘f7+ ♔f5 43.♘h6++-.

B2) 39...♖d1! 40.gxf5 f3! 41.♕h3+ ♔g5 42.♕xf3 ♗e5+ 43.♔g2 ♘f4+ 44.♔h2 ♘e2+=.

C) 28.♕xc3?? ♘d4-+.

28...♖xf1+!

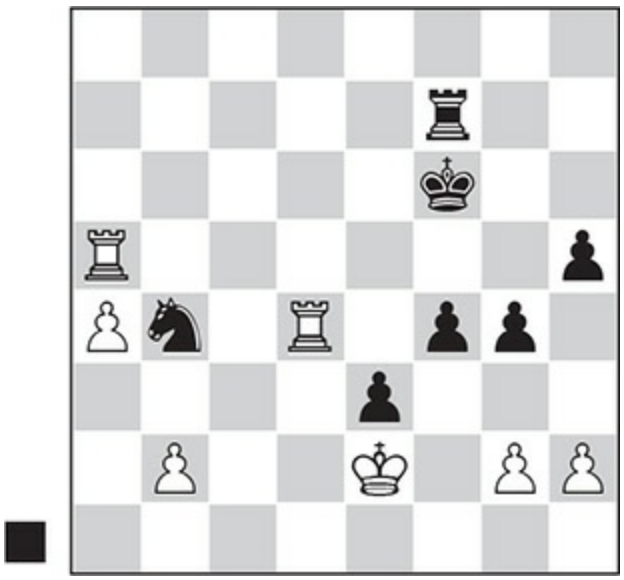
28...♖c1-+.

29.♔xf1 ♗h3+ 30.♔g1 ♘d4 0-1

Game 16 Level 3

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	2731
Etienne Bacrot	2705

Elista 2008 (3)



The position at first glance looks hopeless, but upon closer inspection we can

see that Black has a concrete way to save himself:

41...♔g7!!

Black sacrifices the knight to make his pawn majority on the kingside mean something of value.

A) 41...♔g6?? looks very similar to 41...♔g7, but does not lead to the same outcome: 42.♖xb4! (42.♖d6+! ♔g7 43.♖g5+ ♔f8 44.♖d8+ ♔e7 45.♖b8+-) 42...f3+ 43.gxf3 gxf3+ 44.♔xe3! (44.♔f1? ♖c7=; not 44...e2+? 45.♔f2 ♖e7 46.♖b6+! ♔f7 47.♖f5+ ♔g7 48.♖g5+ ♔f7 49.♖g1+-) 44...f2 45.♖b6+! ♔h7 46.♖xh5+ ♔g7 47.♖g5+ ♔h7 (47...♔f8 48.♖b8+ ♔e7 49.♖b7++-) 48.♖b4! ♖f3+!? (48...♔h6 49.♖g2+-) 49.♔d2! ♖h3 (49...♔h6 50.♖g2 ♔h5 51.♖b8+-) 50.♔e2+-.

B) 41...f3+?? 42.gxf3 gxf3+ 43.♔xf3+-;

C) 41...♘c6?? 42.♖xf4++-.

42.♖xb4

42.♖g5+ ♔h6 43.♖e5 f3+ 44.gxf3 gxf3+ 45.♔f1 (45.♔xe3? ♘c2+-+) 45...♘c2! 46.♖de4!? (46.♖d6+!?) 46...♖b7! (46...♖d7? 47.♖xe3+-) 47.b4 e2+ 48.♔f2 e1♕+ 49.♖xe1 ♘xe1 50.♖xe1 ♖xb4=.

42...f3+ 43.gxf3

43.♔f1 e2+ 44.♔f2 fxg2+.

43...gxf3+ 44.♔f1!

44.♔xe3? f2 45.♖g5+ ♔h6-+.

44...♖c7!

44...♖d7=; 44...e2+? 45.♔f2 ♖e7 46.♖g5+ ♔h6 47.♖g1+-; 44...♖e7? 45.♖f4+-.

45.♖a7! ♖xa7=

Black went on to save this rook and pawn ending easily.

We will pay more attention to this concept in our subsequent books.

6. The initiative

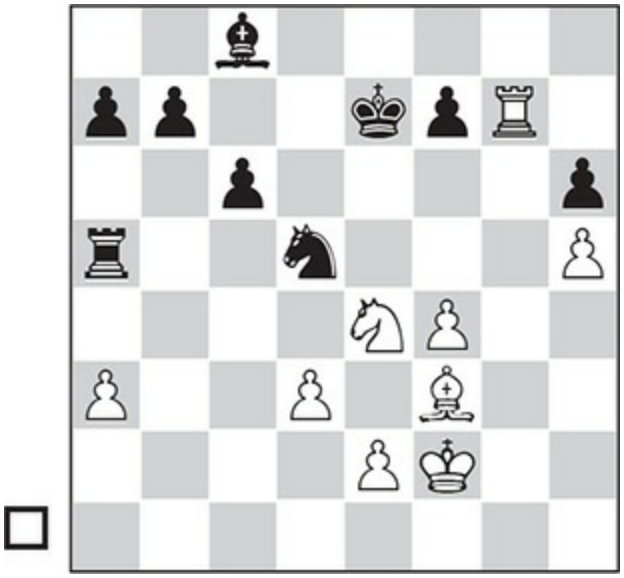
The initiative is the essence of any sport. In soccer, we cannot hope to score a goal unless we possess the ball. Similarly, in chess, we need to create threats at various stages of the game to have any chance of playing for a win. There is a struggle for the initiative from the opening. It is a form of attack that is

temporary. We can have the initiative when our opponent has an uncastled king, or when we have a development advantage, etc.
Initiative means superiority – José Raúl Capablanca.
Nowhere is time-wasting more severely punished than in chess – Samuel Reshevsky.

Game 17 Level 4

Ferenc Berkes	2706
Sebastian Bogner	2534

Germany Bundesliga 2011/12 (12)



34.♘g5! (threat)
This shows that not all endgames are boring technical affairs and that tactical alertness is required throughout the game. White seizes the initiative with this sacrifice.
Directly going after the h-pawn with 34.♖h7?! is not efficient, as Black gets sufficient counterplay after 34...♗f5 35.♖xh6 ♗xe4 36.♗xe4 ♘xf4∞.
34...hxg5
White gets a dangerous passed pawn as a result.
A) 34...♗e6 allows 35.f5!, luring the bishop away from the f7-pawn and getting attacking chances against the black king as well:
A1) 35...♔f6 36.♘xe6 fxe6 (36...♘e7!? 37.♖h7+-) 37.♖g6+ ♔xf5

38.e4++-;

A2) 35...♔f8 36.♘xe6+ fxe6 37.♖xb7+-;

A3) 35...hxg5 36.fxe6 ♔xe6 37.♖xg5+–, the outside passed pawn is too dangerous.

B) 34...♔f8 35.♖xf7+ ♔g8 36.♗xd5 cxd5 37.♖c7+-.

35.h6 (threat) 35...♗f5

35...♘f6 36.fxg5 ♗f5 37.gxf6+ ♔xf6 38.e4 ♗g6 39.d4 ♖xa3 40.e5+ ♔e6 (40...♔f5 41.h7+-) 41.♖xg6+!+-;

35...♔f8 36.♖xg5+-.

36.e4! (threat)

White does not want to let up the pressure and keeps making one threat after another, keeping Black busy with defending tasks.

A) 36.fxg5? ♔f8 37.e4 (37.♗h5 ♗e6) 37...♗g6 38.exd5 cxd5∞;

B) 36.♖xg5? ♘xf4 37.h7 ♘h3+ 38.♔g3 ♘xg5 39.h8♕ ♘xf3 40.♔xf3 b6=;

C) 36.♗e4?? ♗xe4 37.dxe4 ♘f6 38.fxg5 ♖xg5-+.

36...♘xf4?

A) 36...gxf4 37.exf5 ♘f6 38.h7 ♘xh7 39.♖xh7 ♖xf5 (39...♖xa3 40.♗h5±) 40.♗h5±;

B) 36...♗g6 37.♖xg6! (capture) 37...fxg6 38.h7 (threat)+-;

C) 36...♔f8 37.exf5 gxf4 38.♗xd5 ♖xd5 39.f6+-.

37.exf5 (capture)

Now both the knight and rook are unable to come to the kingside to stop the dangerous passed pawn.

37...♔f8

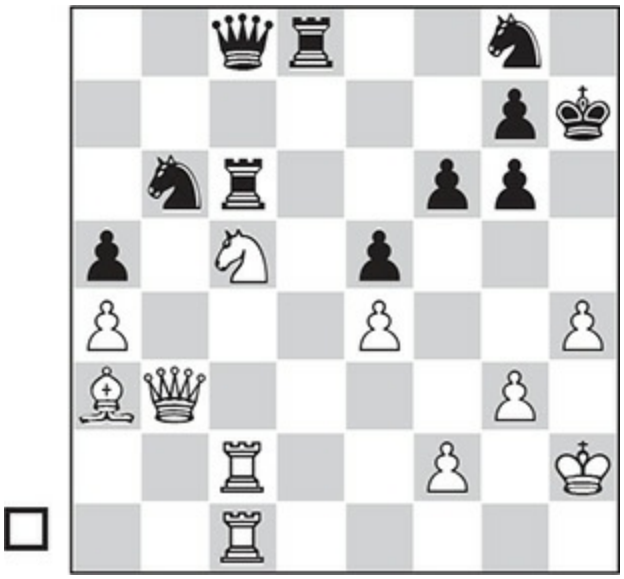
37...♔f6 38.♖g8+-.

38.f6 (threat) 1-0

Game 18 Level 1

Robert Markus	2592
Petr Haba	2439

Austria Bundesliga 2021 (1)



TASK 1*: Find the forced win for White. Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

36.♘d7!

I would not be surprised if some players did not even consider this move seriously at this level despite thinking for some time. If you found it and managed to prove its correctness in your analysis, you are doing great!

36...♖xc2

36...♖xd7 37.♖xc6+-.

37.♘f8+!

This is the move that justifies the previous move.

37...♔h8

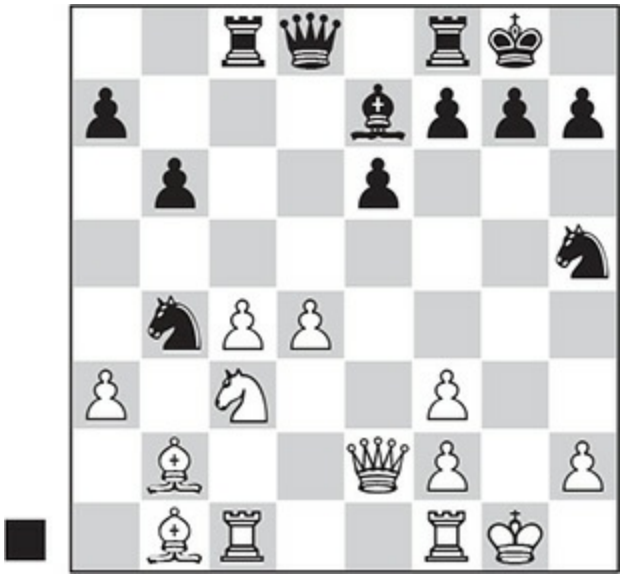
37...♖xf8 38.♖xc2+-.

38.♘xg6+ ♔h7 39.♘f8+ ♔h8 40.♖xc2 ♕g4 41.♕xb6+-

Game 19 Level 2

Peter Svidler	2729
Vladimir Kramnik	2753

Amsterdam 2019 (6)



TASK 1*: Time to think: 5 minutes. Find a good counterattacking continuation for Black.*

16...♗d6!

Directly going for mate.

17.f4

A) 17.♘e4 f5 18.♘xd6 ♘f4!-+;

B) 17.♕e4 f5 18.♕xe6+ ♔h8 19.axb4 ♘f4-+. Usually when the knight lands on this square, especially if opponent's f-pawns are doubled, it is quite ominous;

C) 17.♔h1 ♕h4 18.f4 ♗xf4 19.f3 ♘g3+-+.

17...♕h4 18.f3

18.♕f3 ♗xf4-+.

18...♘xf4 19.♕d2 ♘bd3-+ 0-1

Black wins a lot of material.
We will pay more attention to this concept in our subsequent books.

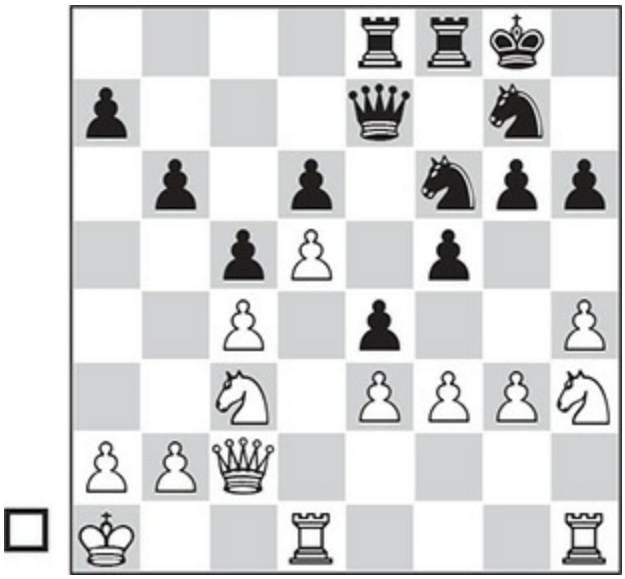
7. The drawback principle

This is another principle that has been largely ignored in chess books. Most of the moves played have a good and a bad side to them. Only the ratio of good and bad in the move keeps varying. In good moves, there are more good and less bad elements and vice versa.

When we pay attention to the good side of a coming move by the opponent, and do something about it, we call this prophylactic thinking. But many moves also have a bad side to them. Suppose we can identify the drawback of the opponent's previous move and can do something about it to our advantage. This is called the drawback principle. Humans had enjoyed the benefits of gravity before Newton codified it; similarly, all the strong chess players have been applying this kind of thinking in their games already; I am just codifying it here. But at the lower level, it is very beneficial to know about this method of thinking, especially when we have many moves that are forcing in nature. If we look carefully at most forcing variations, we can see the drawback principle silently in play. The books usually talk only about prophylaxis a lot but are silent about the drawback concept. Prophylaxis is primarily valuable for static positions; drawback is very effective in dynamic

positions.

Game 20 Level 2
Evgeny Tomashevsky 2695
Anton Shomoev 2557
Moscow 2011 (4)



Black has just played 21...e4. Let us see the drawback principle in action.
22.♘f4
The drawback of Black's previous move 21...e4 is that it gives White access to the f4-square.
22...♕f7
The black queen defends the g6-pawn, but the drawback of this move is:
23.♘b5
The pawn on d6 has lost its support because of Black's queen move.
23...♖d8?!
A passive defensive move that reduces the activity of the black rook, condemning it to a passive role.
The drawback to 23...♕d7!? would have been 24.♘xg6.
The drawback of the black rook abandoning the e-file is that it allows White to play:
24.fxe4

White gets some action on the e-file.

24...♘xe4

And the drawback of this move is that it allows White to play:

25.g4! a6 26.gxf5∞

White could have got a small advantage with 26.♘a3.

26...axb5

was played in the game that White eventually won... 1-0

We will pay more attention to this concept in our subsequent books.

8. The pawn break

This is an effective tool that can be used for various purposes:

a) to open up the position when it is very cramped for a lack of space;

b) to gain access to the opponent's king when our king is castled, while the opponent's king is still in the centre in the opening phase of the game;

c) as a tool to start action on one side of the board;

d) to fight for the initiative; and

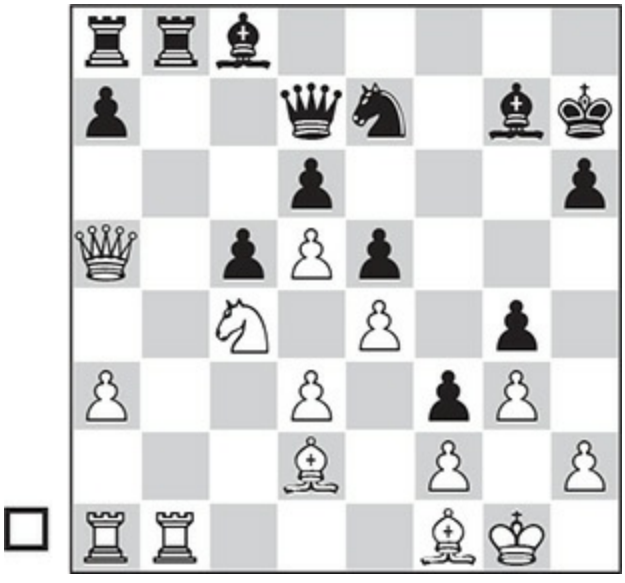
e) as a tactical motif.

Game 21 Level 2

Erwin l'Ami 2610

Viktor Kortchnoi 2602

Amsterdam 2008 (10)



The queenside seems to be the area where the main battle takes place. Based on the pawn structure, White has a very nice square for his knight on c4. Generally, most of White's pieces are more active than Black's. Another important aspect is the weakness of the base of Black's pawn chain, namely the d6-pawn. Among White's forces, only the light-squared bishop lacks any sort of mobility. Based on these features, White can embark on his next move.

25.d4! (pawn break) 25...cxd4

25...exd4 26.♗f4+-. The d6-pawn cannot be saved and White will get connected passed pawns.

26.♗b4 (threat)

The point! Either of the captures give access to White to attack the weak d6-pawn.

26...♘g6 27.♗xd6 (capture)

White's pieces are more active and he should win comfortably.

27...♖xb1 28.♖xb1 ♗f6 29.♗c7

29.♘b6 is a simple tactic that White could have played too.

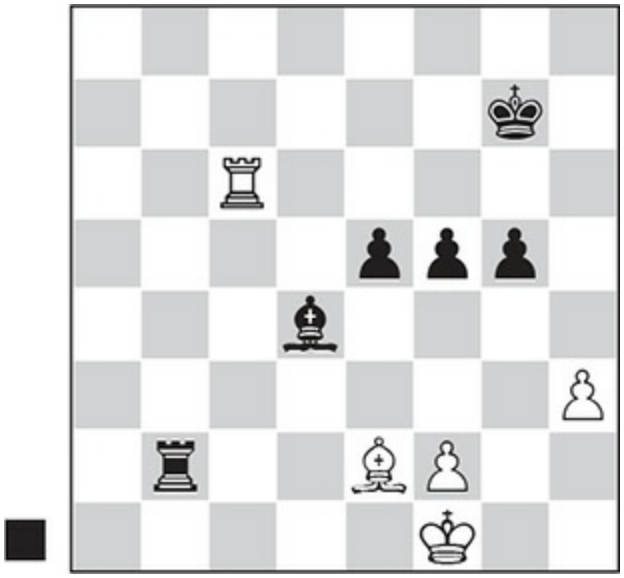
29...♕g7 30.♘d6 ♗d7 31.♖b7 ♘f8 32.♖xa7 ♖xa7 33.♕xa7 ♕g5 34.♘c4 ♗g7 35.♗d6 1-0

White dominated with his overwhelming positional advantage in terms of better pieces and pawn structure. He used little tactics to achieve this favourably.

Game 22 Level 1

Olga Badelka	2440
Aleksey Goganov	2589

Cheliabinsk 2021 (6)



TASK 1*: Find a forced way to win some material. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

Another slightly tougher position for this level. Give your best effort and check your conclusions carefully before seeing the solution!

53...f4! 54.f3

54.♔e1 ♖b1+ 55.♔d2 (55.♗d1 ♗xf2+-+) 55...♗xf2-+.

54...e4!

A very important resource.

55.fxe4 f3 56.♗d3

To stop 56...♖b1 checkmate.

56.♗xf3 ♖f2+-+.

56...♖d2

56...♖h2 57.♔e1 ♖xh3-+.

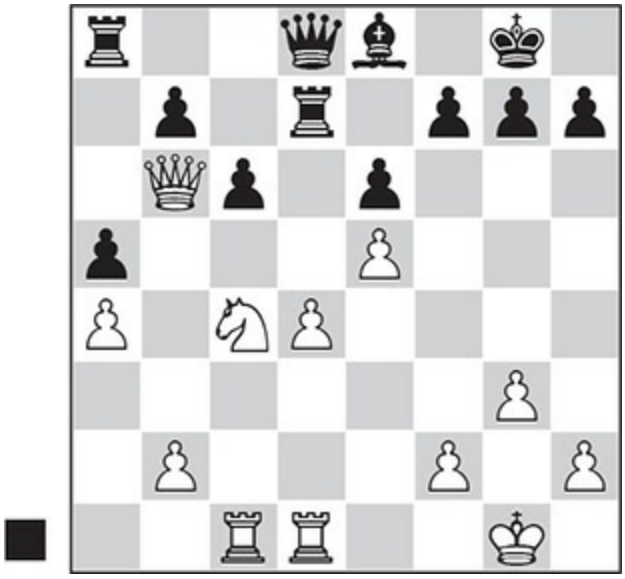
57.♗c2 ♖h2

White resigned.

Game 23 Level 3

Santosh Gujrathi Vidit	2642
Natalija Pogonina	2454

Gibraltar 2016 (5)



This game is a good example of what happens when we try to defend slightly worse positions against a stronger and experienced player. They will gradually outplay us without chances of counterplay. Hence, it is important to seize our active chances early on before things become too cramped.

TASK 1*: How can Black defend this position? Time to think: 10 minutes.*

23...c5!

Black's bishop on e8 is very happy to see this move. New doors are being opened for it!

23...♖d5?! is the move I mentioned earlier, while explaining (about forcing moves) that pawn breaks also help in accelerating the speed of the game. When the position is of a closed nature, both sides should keep an eye on the possible pawn breaks by both sides, as they can turn the tide of the game very quickly. 24.♕xd8 ♖axd8 25.♘d6. White keeps the pressure on.

In the game, Black played 23...♖a6? and suffered for a long time. When our pieces are cramped and lacking in space to move about, it is important to keep looking for creative ways to conjure activity. 24.♕b3± ♖d5 25.♕xb7! ♖a8 26.♘d6 ♖b8 27.♕a6 ♗d7 28.♕e2+- ♕b6 29.♕h5 ♖f8 30.♘c4 ♕b4 31.♘e3 ♕xb2 32.♖b1 ♕c3 33.♕h4 ♕a3 34.♖a1 ♕b3 35.♕e7 ♖e8 36.♕a3 ♕b6 37.♘xd5 cxd5 38.♕d6 ♕a7 39.♖dc1 ♗c8 40.♖c5 and

White won easily. This is what happens when we do not look for active counterplay in a cramped position. We can see how pawn breaks can help us in passive, cramped positions to open up the position for our pieces. But many players will not feel comfortable to drastically change the nature of the position, even if it means they have to struggle for space. The fear of the unknown or the impending complexity can be very tough to handle for many.

24.♕xd8

The critical move. White wants to keep the position locked with the knight on d6 and the pawns on f4 and e5.

After 24.♕xc5 ♖d5, the white queen cannot defend both the d4- and the a4-pawn at the same time: 25.♕a3 ♗xa4!? (25...♖xd4 26.♖xd4 ♕xd4=) 26.♕xa4 b5, and it is obvious that Black has equalised.

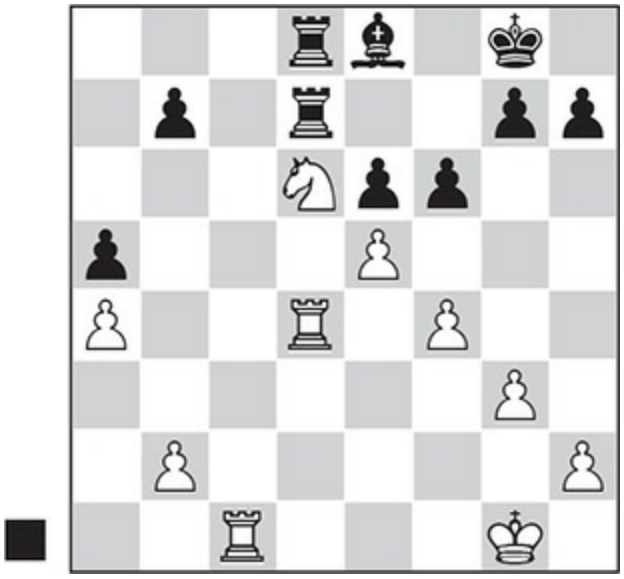
24...♖axd8 25.♘d6!

25.♘xa5 cxd4 26.f4 f6! (another pawn break that comes to Black's aid) 27.♘c4 ♗h5 28.♖d2 ♖c7∓

25...cxd4 26.♖xd4

26.♖c5!? b6 27.♖c6 f6 28.f4 ♖a7! (the reason for this move will become apparent later) 29.♖xb6 (29.♖c4 g5 30.♖dxd4 gxf4 31.gxf4 ♖g7+ 32.♔f2 fxe5 33.fxe5 ♗h5 34.♘e4 ♖xd4 35.♖xd4 ♔f7!=) 29...fxe5 30.fxe5 ♗xa4 31.♖xd4 ♗c2=. If required, Black can advance ...a4-a3 with the rook firmly behind it.

26...f6! 27.f4



TASK 2*: How should Black continue? Time to think: 2 minutes.*

27...g5!

The third important pawn break. This opens the position completely for the black pieces and they can now move around freely.

28.♖dc4

28.♔f2 gxf4 29.gxf4 fxe5 30.fxe5 ♖g7 31.♖g1 ♖xg1 32.♔xg1 ♗c6 33.♖g4+ ♔f8 34.♖f4+ ♔g8 35.♔f2 ♖d7 *(*35...♖a8!? is another creative way to create counterplay: 36.♔e3 ♖a6 37.♔d2 ♖b6 38.♔c3 ♗d5! 39.b4 axb4+ 40.♖xb4 ♖c6+ 41.♔d4 ♖a6 and again, Black has achieved a very comfortable position) 36.♔e3 ♖g7⇋.

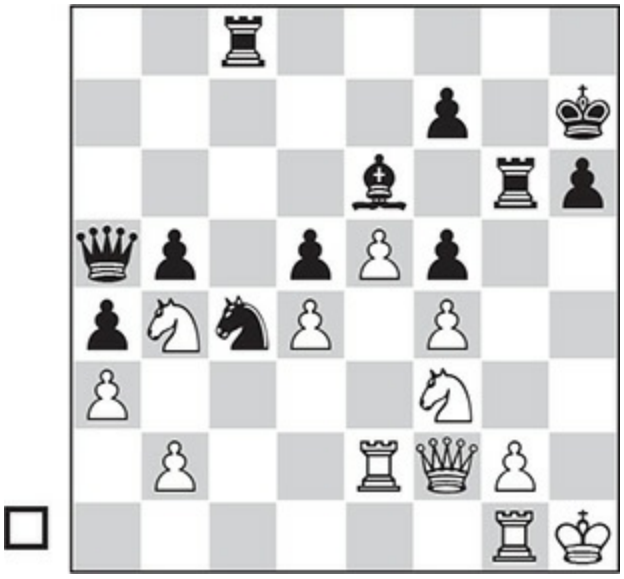
28...gxf4 29.gxf4 ♖g7+ 30.♔f2 ♗c6⇋

Closing the c-file effectively.

Game 24 Level 3

Ramesh RB	2450
Dimitrij Bunzmann	2484

Biel 2000 (8)



TASK 1*: Find the main idea and calculate as deeply as you can. Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

36.g4! ♖xg4

36...fxg4 37.f5! (37.♘h4 g3 38.♖xg3 ♖g4±) 37...♗xf5 38.♘h4 ♗e6 39.♘xg6 fxg6 40.♕f6! ♖e8 (40...♕b6 41.♕e7+ (41.♖f2? ♖g8∞; 41.♘d3 is also good enough for a win) 41...♔g8 42.♖h2! (42.♖f2 ♗f5 43.♖xg4! ♘e3! 44.♖gf4!±) 42...h5 43.♖xh5! gxh5 44.♕g5+ ♔h7 45.♕xh5+ ♔g7 46.♕g5++-) 41.♖xg4 g5 42.♖xg5+-.

37.♖xg4 fxg4 38.♕h4!+

This is the whole point.

38...♔g7

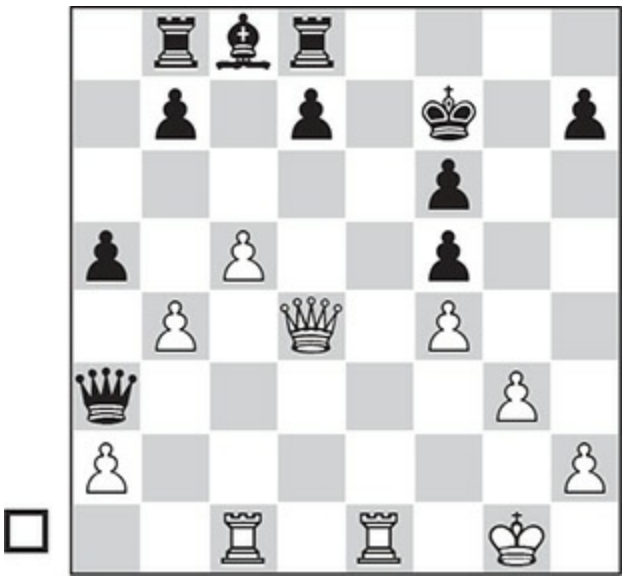
38...gxf3 39.♖h2; 38...♕d8 39.♘g5+ ♔g6 40.♖h2.

39.♖h2+-

Game 25 Level 3

Slavisa Brenjo	2491
Igor Miladinovic	2607

Vrsac 2007 (2) (analysis)



White to play and win

27.g4!!

Adding a new dimension to the attack.

Most of the upcoming students I gave this position to felt that 27.♕d6 was the obvious winning move and could not find the defence for Black. A typical problem at this level: 27.♕d6? ♖e8! (27...♖g8? can be refuted in many ways; one forcing continuation is 28.♕d5+ ♔g7 29.♖e7+ ♔h8 30.♕f7 (30.♖ce1+-) 30...♖xg3+ (30...♕xc1+ 31.♔g2 ♕d2+ 32.♔h3+-) 31.hxg3 ♕xg3+ 32.♔f1 ♕f3+ 33.♔e1+-) 28.♕xb8 ♖xe1+ 29.♖xe1 ♕xb4=.

27.♕d5+ does not work as Black survives after 27...♔g6 28.g4 d6.

27...d5

27...fxg4 loses to either 28.♕d5+, 28.f5 ♕f3 29.♕d6, or 28.♕e4.

28.g5 ♔g8 29.♕xf6 ♖f8 30.♕d6

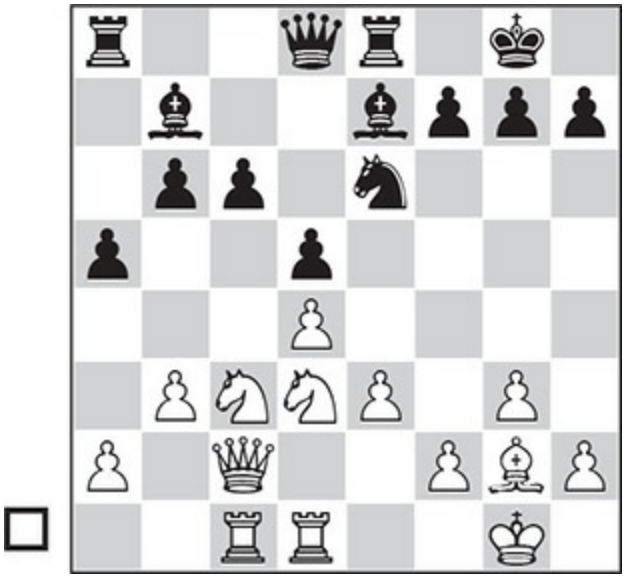
White should win this eventually.

30...♗d7 31.♕xd7 ♖bd8 32.♕e6+ ♔h8 33.c6 bxc6 34.♕e5+ ♔g8 35.♖xc6+-

Game 26 Level 3

Alexander Grischuk	2719
Peter Leko	2747

Elista 2008 (2)



19.♖b1!?

Preparing to open the position on the queenside.

19...♗a3 20.b4!

Here we can see the pawn break being applied to open the queenside to gain better access to the pawn weaknesses there and also to open lines for White's pieces.

20...axb4 21.♘xb4 ♕e7 22.♕b3 ♖a7

After 22...b5 23.♘c2, White can hope to exploit the weaknesses on the queenside in the long run.

23.♘c2 b5 24.♗xd5 cxd5 25.♘xb5 ♖a6 26.♘bxa3

It looks like White has won a healthy pawn, but Black can create serious counterplay on the kingside:

26...♗c8!

Black has good compensation, but White eventually won the game.

We will pay more attention to this concept in our subsequent books.

9. Maintaining tension

I explained this concept in detail in Chapter 8 of my book *Logical Decision Making*. To quote from it: with most exchanges, one side benefits more than the other. The same goes for pawn exchanges. It is often a test of 'who blinks first?'. Lower-rated players are not comfortable in situations where there is some kind of tension, so they are eager to simplify the position by trading. A

higher-rated player has more capacity to withstand tension in the position for a longer period of time.

By maintaining the tension, we add pressure to the opponent psychologically and we also gain certain concrete advantages in the position. It is easier to make a mistake when we have a choice than when we don't have one. So by keeping the pawn tension a little longer, we give our opponent a chance to make an incorrect decision.

We should release the tension only when we:

a) get something concrete in return, like control of a file, a passed pawn, initiative, the pair of bishops, better pawn structure, etc.;

b) cannot postpone releasing the tension, as our opponent will release the tension in his favour on his turn;

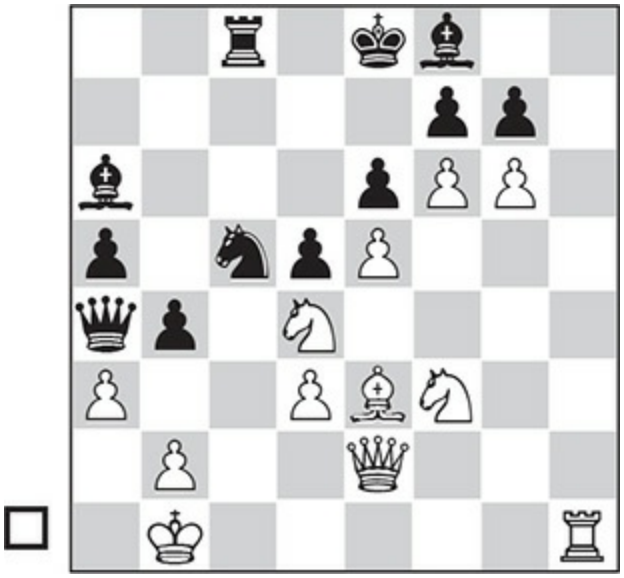
c) see that no useful purpose is served by keeping the tension.

Game 27 Level 2

Alexei Shirov 2730

Mikulas Manik 2426

Ohrid 2009 (1)



27.♖h8!

Not defending the d3-pawn. Counterattack is the best defence.

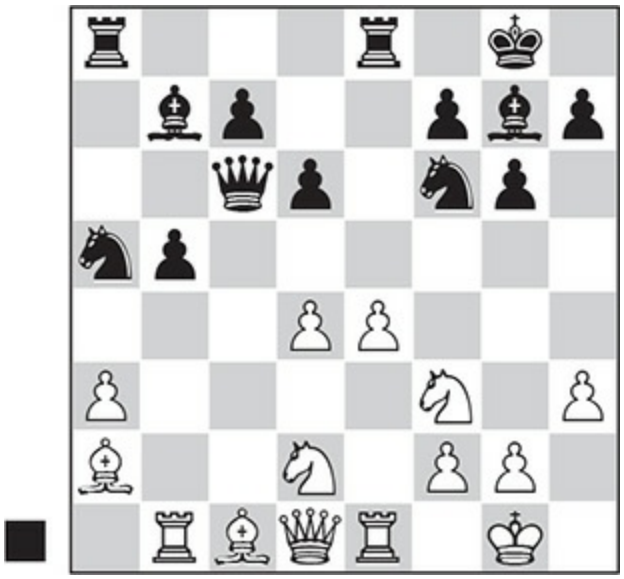
27.gxf7+? ♔d7!.

27...♗xd3+ 28.♕xd3 ♘xd3 29.fxg7 ♕d1+ 30.♔a2 ♔d7 31.♖xf8!
Threatening 32.♖f7 check, followed by 33.g8 with promotion and checkmate.
31...♖e8 32.gxf7
32.♖xe8+-.
32...b3+ 33.♘xb3
Black resigned.

Game 28 Level 4

SP Sethuraman	2639
Radoslaw Wojtaszek	2727

Gibraltar 2016 (9)



19...d5 20.♘e5!? ♕a6
20...♕b6? 21.♘df3! ♘c4 (21...♘xe4 22.♖xe4! dxe4 23.♗xf7+ ♔h8 24.♘g5+-) 22.♘xc4! dxc4 23.♗xc4 ♗xe4 24.♖xb5 ♗xf3 25.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 26.gxf3+-.
21.a4!
The psychological impact of such moves should not be underestimated. Such moves can upset the balance of the mind of many players in the heat of the battle.
21...♘c4

21...bxa4 22.♘xf7 (22.♕c2) 22...♔xf7 23.e5!?∞ ♘d7 (23...♔g8 24.exf6 ♕xf6 25.♖xb7 ♖xe1+ 26.♕xe1 ♘xb7 27.♗xd5+ ♔h8 28.♗xb7 ♖b8∞) 24.♕f3+ ♔g8 25.♖xb7!.

22.♖xb5

22...♘xd2?

The pressure generated by White's previous moves that maintained the tension was a prime reason for inducing Black to commit this mistake. 22...♘d6 23.♖b4±; 22...♘xe5! is the only way to get a playable position: 23.dxe5 ♖xe5 24.♘f3 (24.♗b2 ♖e7 (24...♖ee8 25.e5 ♘d7 26.♗xd5 ♗xd5 27.♖xd5 ♘b6 28.♖b5 ♘xa4 29.♕b3 ♘xb2 30.♕xb2∞) 25.♕a1 ♕xa4 26.♗xf6 ♗xf6 27.♕xf6 ♕xb5 28.♕xe7 ♕b2!∞ – 28...♖xa2? 29.e5! ±) 24...♖xe4 25.♖xe4 ♘xe4 26.♖xb7 ♕xb7 27.♗xd5 ♕a7 28.♗xe4 ♕xa4∞. It is important to assess this position correctly to go for this variation in a game. When one is under pressure, it is easy to imagine ghosts where none exist.

23.♗xd2 ♕xa4 24.♕xa4 ♖xa4 25.♗b3 ♖xd4 26.♘f3±

White won in a few more moves.

10. Intermediate moves

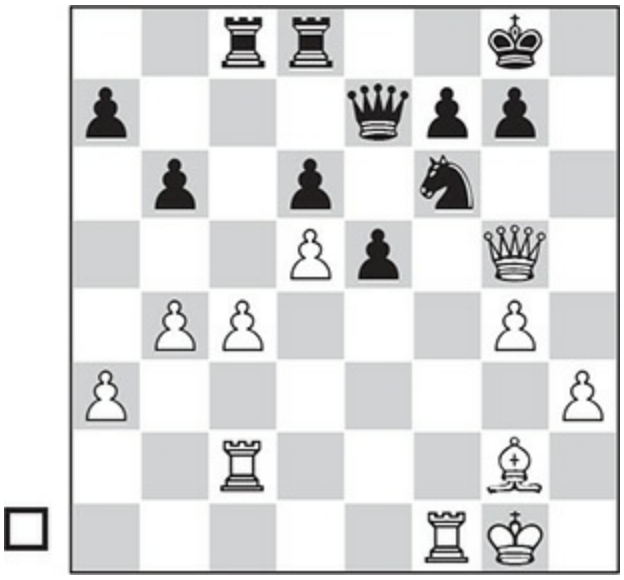
This is one of the concepts where even very strong players go wrong quite often. The human mind loves continuity in action and can easily

underestimate or overlook intermediate moves while calculating variations. Intermediate moves disturb the flow of the moves by introducing a shocking move or concept all of a sudden at unexpected places. They have a substantial psychological impact on the opponent.

Game 29 Level 3

Etienne Bacrot	2719
Robert Kempinski	2620

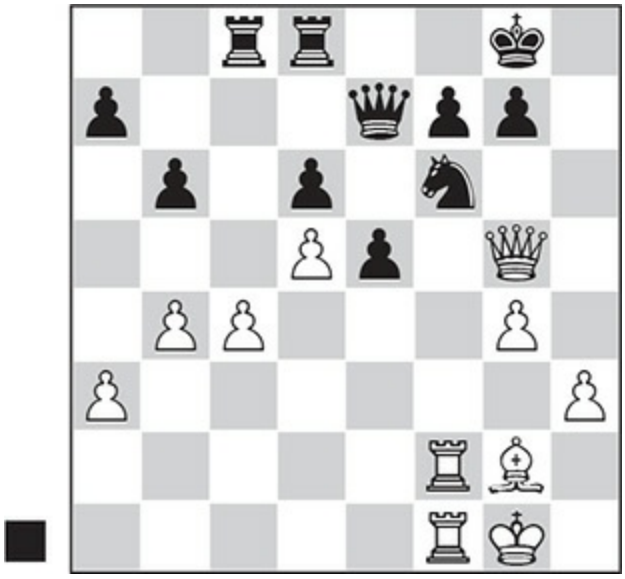
Germany Bundesliga 2014/15 (14)



From this example, let us try to identify some of the common mistakes chess players at this level make while analysing positions in general and in calculation in particular.

29.♖cf2?

29.♕e3 ♖c7∞.



TASK 1*: Time to think: 10 minutes.*

29...♘xd5?

Black misses the boat completely! It so happens in a practical game that a player calculates a variation, checks it thoroughly, does not find anything wrong with it and plays it. The opponent also sees the same variations and comes to same conclusions! The funny part is that both miss something that is not so obvious at all. It is as if a deep, subconscious understanding exists among the players! Such is the case here. Both White and Black are optimistic about White's pressure on the f-file and act according to that belief.

29...♖xc4! looks like a blunder but... 30.♖xf6 ♖f4!. This is the 'minor' detail both players probably missed. Missing intermediate moves and missing not so obvious, long-term sacrifices are both common problems even for stronger players, and definitely at the upcoming player level. Instead of White exploiting the pin on the ♘f6, it is Black who is benefiting from the counter-pin on the ♖f6! The tragedy for White is that, after an eventual 31.♖f5 (31.♖1xf4 is the better move order for White to avoid 32...♖f1, as shown below: 31...exf4 32.♖f5 ♕xg5! (32...♕e3+?! 33.♔h2 ♕g3+ 34.♔h1 ♕e1+ 35.♔h2, and Black has nothing better than a draw by perpetual check) 33.♖xg5 g6, transposing to lines after 31.♖f5) 31...♕xg5

32.♖xg5 g6! (32...♖xf1+ 33.♔xf1 g6 34.♗e4 ♔g7 is also winning for Black after 35.h4 ♖h8! 36.♗xg6 fxg6 37.h5 ♖h6), the ♖g5 is trapped and cannot escape from the cage. Ideally, if we can come to this point in our analysis in five minutes, we can be reasonably happy. While analysing positions, there are two aspects we need to take note of. One is identifying the main idea or the concept in the position, and the other is making it work – the nitty-gritty of the variations. Some players have difficulty in spotting the main tactical idea, others have a hard time going through the move-to-move, concrete analysis, and the rest have a tough time doing both! 33.♖xf4 exf4. Black is threatening to play 34...♔g7 and 35...f6, trapping the rook, so White must do something concrete instead of looking for general moves: 34.♗e4

analysis diagram

34...♔g7! 35.h4.

A) Black has to be careful, as the hasty 35...♖e8?? spoils all the hard work done until now: 36.♗xg6 fxg6 37.h5+-;

B) 35...♖h8?? 36.♗xg6! fxg6 37.h5 ♖h6 38.♔f2 ♔f6 39.♖xg6+ ♖xg6 40.hxg6 ♔xg6 41.♔f3 ♔g5 42.b5! and White wins because of zugzwang. This goes to show that accuracy and alertness are required even after we get a good position; reducing our alertness is not an option until the game is really over;

C) 35...♔h6? does not work: 36.♔f2 ♖c8 37.♔f3⇆;

D) 35...♔f6! is a nice prophylactic move, preventing tricks associated with ♗xg6 followed by h4-h5 ideas to get the rook out of the cage. Even though White has an extra piece, his rook is never going to see the light of day. Black's rook will have a free hand to collect White's pawns one by one: 36.♔g2 *(*36.♔f2 was the move suggested by an 1800+ student while analysing from the initial position in his mind without moving pieces on the board: 36...♖h8-+. When we look at positions casually, the difference between the moves 36.♔g2 and 36.♔f2 will not be obvious, nor will it seem to be that important and warrant our attention. But real improvement happens when we begin to understand and appreciate the relevance of being curious about such small details and take the pain to learn the difference between apparently similar looking moves. The lesson to be learnt is that in many positions, the most natural or the obvious move is not the best move and there is always some concrete detail we need to find before we can come to a correct conclusion) and now:

D1) 36...♖h8. This is good technique: lure the white king away to the kingside and then use the e-file to penetrate with the rook: 37.♔h3 (this would not have been possible had White played 36.♔f2; 37.♔f3 ♖xh4 38.♔xf4 ♖h3 39.a4 ♖b3 40.b5 ♖b4-+) 37...♖e8-+. Black will soon collect the white pawns, while the white rook remains in the cage;

D2) 36...♖e8 is also good enough for a win, but it gives White an interesting way to play for a counter-attack: 37.♗f5!? (the bishop is working very hard to give itself up to get the rook out of the cage) 37...♖e3 38.♗e6!? and here 38...fxe6? spoils all the hard work done so far in a single move: 39.dxe6 ♖xa3 40.e7 ♖e3 41.b5 ♖xe7 42.♖d5∞ and despite being two pawns down, Black is unable to take advantage of his pawns and White gets sufficient counterplay. However, Black is not obliged to take the bishop: 38...♖xa3! 39.♗xf7!? ♔xf7 40.h5,

analysis diagram

and finally it looks like the white rook can escape from the cage, but...
40...♖g3+! is the key move for Black in this variation: 41.♔f2 gxh5
42.♖xh5 ♔g6!. This makes sure White's rook will not be able to attack the d6- and a7-pawns easily, thereby gaining precious time for Black's rook to go after White's weak pawns and establish a clear material superiority (42...♖xg4? 43.♔f3!=): 43.♖h8 ♖b3, and the ending should be a win for Black. Finally, if 29...♔f8? 30.♕h4+-; and if 29...♔h8? 30.♖xf6+-.

30.♕xe7 ♘xe7 31.♖xf7 ♖e8

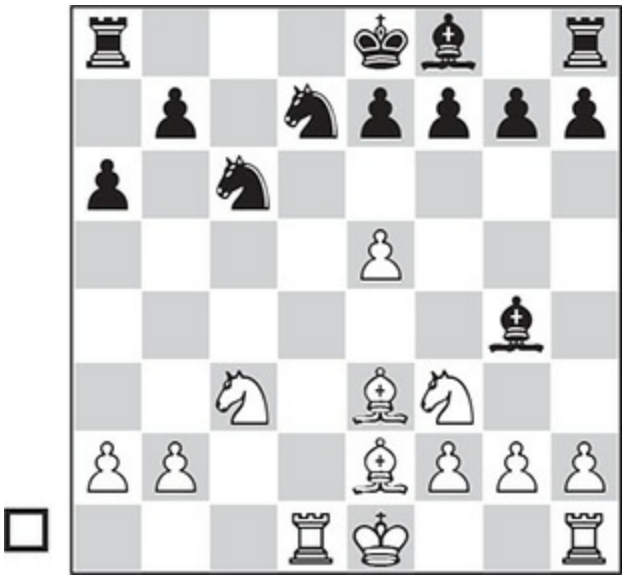
31...♘g6 32.♗d5 ♔h7 33.♖xa7 ♘f4 34.♔h2+-.

32.g5

White gets a clear advantage that he easily converted to a win.
We see from this example that chess is a game where the human element also plays a major role in our decision-making. Keeping good concentration and remaining alert throughout the game for using the not so obvious chances that come our way out of the blue are some of the qualities we need to cultivate consciously.

Game 30 Level 3

Sergei Tiviakov	2669
Sergey Karjakin	2660



White has a big lead in development, but the price he had to pay for that is in the form of the weak e5-pawn, which is under a double attack. There seems to be no good way to defend the pawn, but upon closer inspection we can see that White indeed has a fantastic resource:

14.h3! ♗xf3

14...♗h5 15.♘d5!? (15.e6!? fxe6 16.♘g5 ♗xe2 17.♔xe2±) 15...0-0-0 16.e6 fxe6 17.♘f4±; 14...♗f5 15.g4 ♗g6 16.e6±.

15.e6!!

This turns the game upside down.

15.♗xf3 ♘dxe5.

15...fxe6

15...♗xe2 16.exd7+ ♔d8 17.♗b6#.

16.♗xf3

White obtains a clear advantage. Karjakin came up with some creative defensive moves in the final stages of the game and escaped with a draw.

We have seen some of the essential concepts involved in dynamic positions with an example for each one. We will cover most of these concepts again in detail in the subsequent books of this series. Let us now shift our attention to the other side of the coin. We will not cover the static concepts in this book

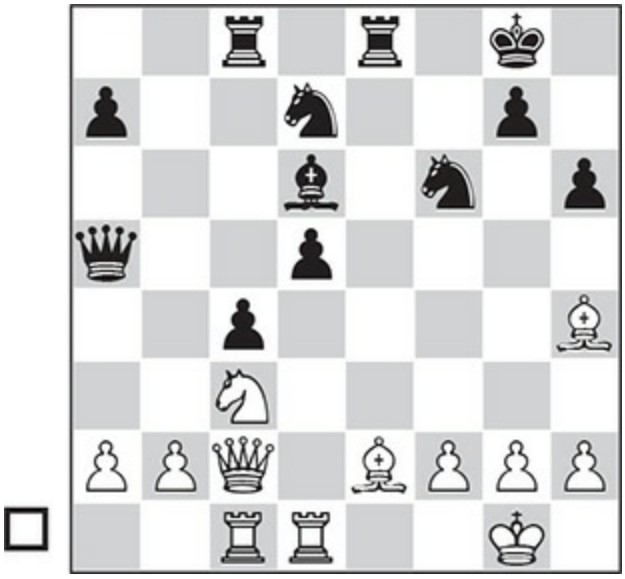
apart from highlighting the important topics in this area.

Critical areas to learn for static positions

1. Prophylaxis

This has been covered extensively in many books. Let me give an example here so as not to let it feel ignored:

Game 31 Level 3
Santosh Gujrathi Vidit 2718
Le Quang Liem 2728
Danzhou 2018 (7)



TASK 1*: How can White fight for an advantage? Time to think: 5 minutes.*

20.♕f5?

This was played in the game, and White lost most of his advantages in the position.

20.♗f3? is very tempting, but unfortunately Black has a nice tactic: 20...d4! 21.♖xd4 ♕e5!-+.

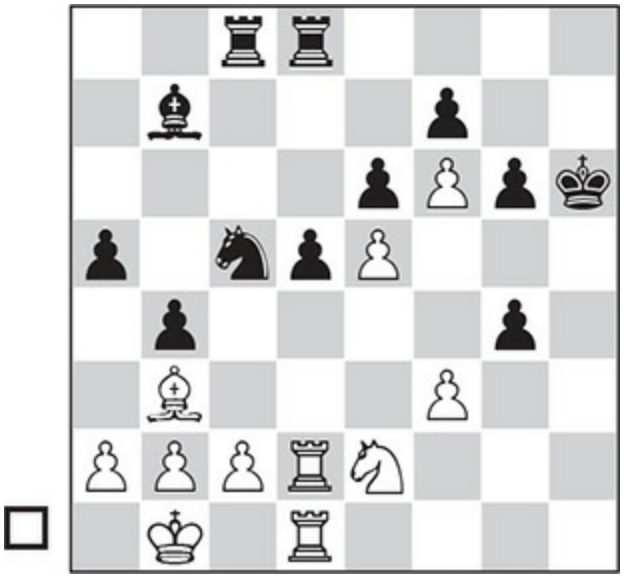
20.♗xf6! ♘xf6 21.g3! are the key moves that need to be found: 21...♖e5 22.♗f3. White can follow up with ♔g2, and at the right time the ♘c3-e2-d4

manoeuvre and the b2-b3 break. White has a clear and comfortable advantage without much risk. This is mostly a prophylactic continuation, but the idea of g2-g3 can be found by calculating the 20.♗f3? variation, and from that line we come up with an improvement. This position was chosen to highlight how interconnected positional and tactical concepts are, and how they complement each other. In modern chess, to be a good positional player, one needs to have good calculation skills too, and vice versa.
The direct 20.g3! is also possible, leading to similar positions as in the 20.♗f6! line.
20...♔h8⇆
The position is complex but balanced.

2. Piece improvement

Mark Dvoretsky has written a book on this topic: *Maneuvering: The Art of Piece Play*. We will cover this topic in detail in the subsequent books. How a player handles his pieces reveals a lot about the positional understanding of the player. It is very important that we do not keep our pieces in passive, undeveloped squares for long. Pieces thrive on activity.

Game 32 Level 1
Leinier Dominguez Perez 2758
Magnus Carlsen 2862
Opera Euro Rapid Prelim 2021 (5)



This is a comparatively tough position for this level.

TASK 1: *Find an effective mating attack against the black king. One that actually works! Not just a good looking attacking continuation. If you find the answer for this position, you can be really proud of yourself. Time to think: 10 minutes.*

28.♖d4!

This move would have weaved a mating net around the black king and White would have won the game. Such moves are tough to find and evaluate correctly for players at this level. This is because the moves are not forced and it does not appear to win the game immediately.

Black was better after the game continuation 28.♖h1+? and went on to win the game with 28...♔g5∓. 28.f4? g5!-+. One of my students completely missed this resource after which Black is simply winning. 28...♔h7? 29.♖h1+ ♔g8 30.♘g3+– was given as a solution by a student. He did not check the solution for mistakes and as a result could not find out where Black can change in this variation. A good attempt though.

28...g5

28...♘xb3 29.♖h1+ ♔g5 30.f4+ ♔f5 31.♘g3#.

29.♖xg4 a4

29...♘xb3 30.♘f4+-.

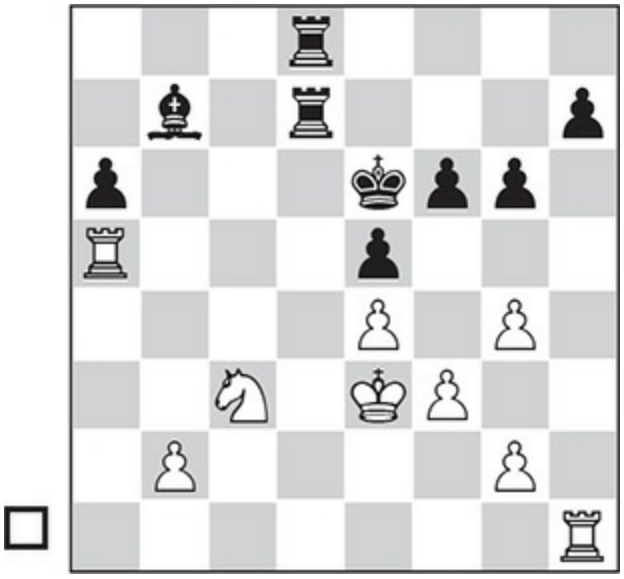
30.♘f4!

Followed by ♖h1 and mate: 0-1

Game 33 Level 1

Baadur Jobava	2603
Glenn Flear	2431

Tornelo Rapid 2021



TASK 1*: Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes. Find a powerful continuation for White here.*

31.♘a4!

After this move, Black cannot defend the h7-pawn, the rook and the bishop all at the same time. Something has to give.

31...♖d3+ 32.♔f2 ♖d2+ 33.♔g3

Thus, White's king reaches safety, while all the threats from White remain.

33...♗c8 34.♖xh7+-

We will cover these two static concepts, as well as thirteen other ones, in a separate book.

Chess is, at the same time, both dynamic and static in nature. In most positions, both dynamic and static elements are present but in varying

degrees. Some positions are more dynamically inclined (with static elements present in a comparatively smaller ratio) and vice versa.

An important point to note here is that the concepts mentioned in bold can play a significant role in dynamic positions as well. But in my experience, I tend to believe that these occur more in static positions than otherwise.

Under dynamic and static positions, several areas can be used for both purposes. So these are not strict classifications but they work in most cases.

If a player gets a good grip on both dynamic and static concepts, he will be able to handle any position well. In this book, we will focus on dynamic concepts of calculation and, to some extent, forcing moves. In the subsequent series of books, we will be covering the rest of the concepts.

Assessment of positions

One of the areas where many upcoming players have difficulty is the assessment of positions. In the book *Find the Right Plan with Anatoly Karpov* (2008), the following are given as 'established seven basic principles or reference points according to which the study of any position should be undertaken':

1. material relationship between the forces
2. presence of direct threats
3. position of the kings, their safety
4. possession of open lines
5. pawn structure, weak and strong squares
6. the centre and space
7. development and the position of pieces

In my view, the following reference points will be helpful to assess a position, arranged in their order of importance:

1. king safety
2. activity of pieces
3. material

4. all other factors like pawn structure, weaknesses, space advantage, passed pawns, control of the centre, bishop pair, etc.

We will go deeper into this topic in the next book of the series.

CHAPTER 2

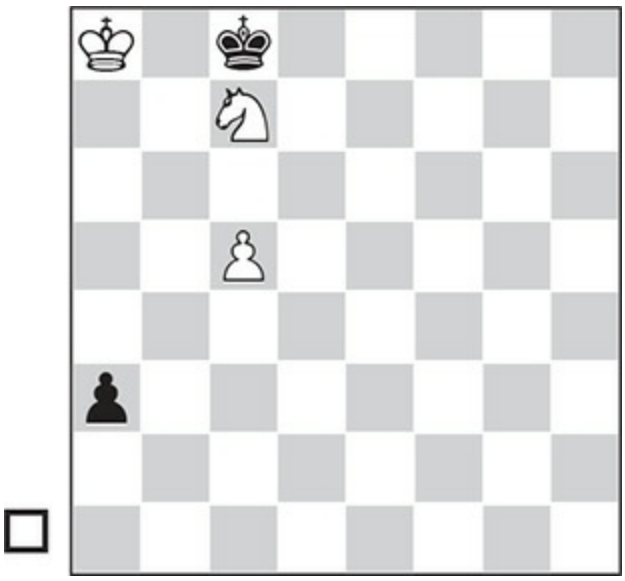
Calculation training with students

In this chapter, I would like to share a few games and positions that I have used to train my students at various points in time. This chapter aims to recreate the training session for the reader and show the students' typical mistakes. We can learn by comparing our analysis with the students' analysis and learn from the process. The positions, being diverse and rich, are good examples for study in their own right. Additionally, they also contain the experiences and viewpoints of different levels of students. I hope readers will find this instructive and exciting.

For a player to be good in calculation, he has to meet these five criteria:

1. He should look as deeply as possible into the position and thus see more moves in his calculation.
2. It is not enough to see one straight main line. It is essential to see as many branches as required. We should see multiple variations as per the requirements of the position.
3. There should be no or few mistakes in the variations seen in our calculation. Analysing deeply with multiple branches but with many errors does not serve the purpose.
4. All the above should be done with as little time/energy/effort as possible.
5. The evaluation of the critical positions and the final outcome should be correct. We see all the correct variations and come to the wrong conclusion due to errors in evaluation. We should avoid this.

Game 34 Analysis with students
Alexandr Grin
Study, 1989



White to play and draw

Using this position and the subsequent analysis made by a student, let us identify some typical mistakes made in calculation.

1.♘b5

1.♘d5? a2 2.♘b6+ ♔d8.

1...a2 2.c6

The student gave the variation 2.♘a7+? ♔c7 3.c6 a1♕?= after a few minutes of thought and was convinced he got the correct solution, despite being asked to check his answer thoroughly before giving the solution to me. When I pointed out that 3...♔b6! wins for Black, as the a2-pawn promotes on the next move, the student became upset upon realising his mistake. He struggled for an inordinate amount of time after that and finally got the correct solution. Let us try to understand his thought process and the kind of mistakes he made.

1. He saw an idea involving a beautiful stalemate concept and immediately 'allowed' himself to be carried away by it.

Suggestion: Keep calm throughout the analytical process, to the extent possible. Do not allow yourself to be carried away, no matter how brilliant your idea appears to be. It could either be a brilliant idea or it could just appear to be so! In the process of calculating variations, we come across all kinds of moves and ideas. Some of them appear to be correct and others

appear to be incorrect. Do not be deceived by the look of the moves. Whenever you realise you are allowing yourself to become emotional or get carried away by your intelligent-looking idea or move, remind yourself to be calm and not lose objectivity.

2. When I asked this student to check his analysis for possible mistakes, he did not understand the importance of this tool in the analytical process and did a cursory checking of his analysis. It's no surprise that he missed the mistake in his variation.

Suggestion: First of all, we should realise that the analysis we have made after a few minutes of initial thought is only a preliminary analysis and the process is not complete yet. We should be ready to go through our analysis multiple times, looking for any missed opportunities for our opponent or ourselves at every move in the variation. If we have achieved our objective in our analysis (here: finding a draw), we should pay special attention to every move by the opponent in our variation. It is very much possible that we have found some inaccurate moves for our opponent and because of this, we achieved our objective in the analysis. This is a very common problem with many players – finding sub-par moves for the opponent in analysis.

3. Not paying attention to details, especially to move orders in the variations. The concrete variations are more than the way we try to implement our ideas. Minor changes in move orders can have completely different outcomes.

4. Seeing only one variation or possibility. The moment we see an interesting move, we should confirm if it is the only move or not. If it is not the only move or a forced move, we can either make a list of moves there and then, or come back to this moment to look for other alternatives when our main move does not work.

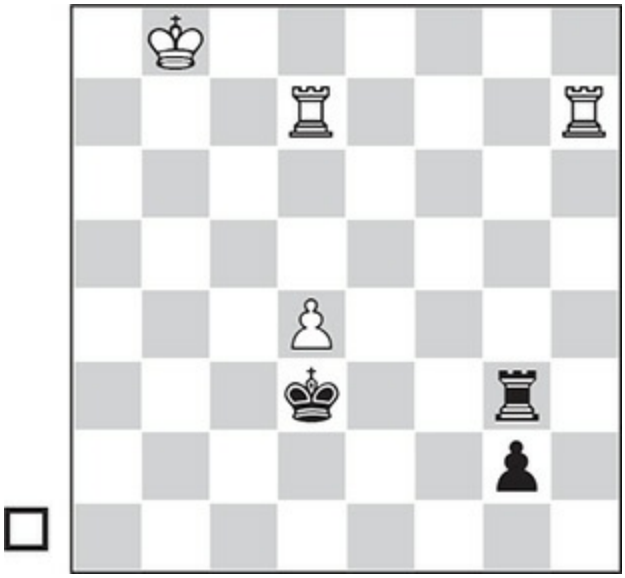
5. Getting too emotional and upset when things do not go the way we want them to. When we analyse a variation and for some reason it does not work, we should check it once more to see if it is not working due to some mistake we made in our analysis or the move/idea itself is incorrect. Once we confirm that our move is incorrect, we simply consider the other candidate moves we had kept in reserve.

2...a1♕+ 3.♘a7+ ♔d8 4.c7+! ♔xc7 ½-½

Game 35 Analysis with students

Ladislav Prokes

Study, 1948



White to play and draw

1.♖h3? ♖xh3 (1...g1♕ 2.♖g7 transposes) 2.♖g7. Most students give this variation as the solution and are quiet content with their effort. This line is refuted by 2...♖h8+! 3.♔b7 ♖h7! 4.♖xh7 g1♕ 5.d5 ♕c5.

Let me approach the problem-solving process from a coach-student viewpoint. First of all, while solving studies/compositions, we should be liberal with the time taken to solve them. When the student feels he is ready to give his version of the solution, he can either write it down and show it (in case of a group session) or verbally give the solution (in case of a one-to-one session).

1. After the student gives the solution, and before looking at the solution and giving your reaction, ask him to check the solution for mistakes on his own.

2. Even after checking the analysis, if the solution provided by the student contains mistakes, ask him to find out why his solution is incorrect and find

the exact moment where he went wrong. Once they come up with the refutation of their own incorrect solution, ask them to approach the position with fresh eyes or try to use the information they obtained from their previous analysis to make changes in their analysis and get the correct solution.

3. Basically, try not to give more information than necessary, like which move is incorrect or where they should make changes in the analysis. This should be done only after they have attempted to find the solution on their own three or more times.

4. In this way, we teach students that they are on their own when it comes to handling their problems over the board, and they will have to rely on no one except themselves. This will make them responsible while analysing.

5. To the extent possible, students should find the complete solution on their own. They should learn to check their own analysis for mistakes, and identify and correct them.

6. Giving clues often while solving will encourage students to put in a half-hearted effort and give half-baked solutions, since they know the coach will eventually give clues and they can pick up the analysis from that point onwards.

7. The coach encourages and motivates students to go through this tough process of analysing, re-analysing, discarding moves that do not work, trying different ideas, etc., and finally finding the correct path. They should be led on the path to become self-reliant.

1.♖dg7 g1♕ 2.♖h3 ♕b1+ 3.♖b7 ♕xb7+

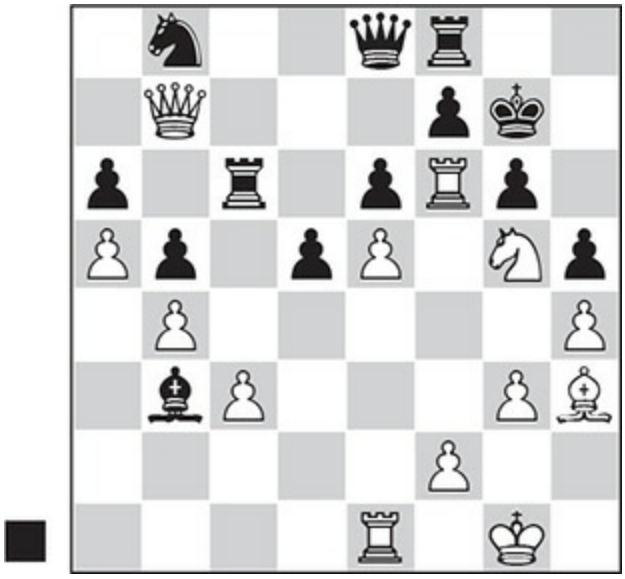
3...♕e1 4.♖b3+.

4.♔xb7 ♖xh3 5.d5 ♖h6 6.♔c7 ½-½

Game 36 Analysis with students

Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa	2608
Oleg Rychkov	2407

chess.com 2020 (10)



TASK 1*: Find the defence for Black – until the end, of course. Time to think: 10 to 15 minutes.*

I gave this position to five players during an online class. Their Elo ratings were 2115, 2050, 1900, 1830 and 1470. The session time was 90 minutes.
I will use the ratings of the players, instead of their names, to indicate the moves they suggested. This way the readers can compare themselves with the players' analysis and draw appropriate conclusions.

38...♔g8?

This loses immediately:

39.♗xe6 fxe6 40.♕h7#

A) 38...d4? 39.cxd4 ♗d5 was suggested by the 1900 player, which is a good start. He is looking for ways to create active counterplay. But this idea is refuted by 40.♗g2!+-;

B) 38...♘d7? 39.♕xc6 ♘xf6 was suggested by the 1830 player. This is refuted in multiple ways, like 40.exf6+ ♔xf6 41.♕xa6+-;

C) 38...♕d7! 39.♕a8!.

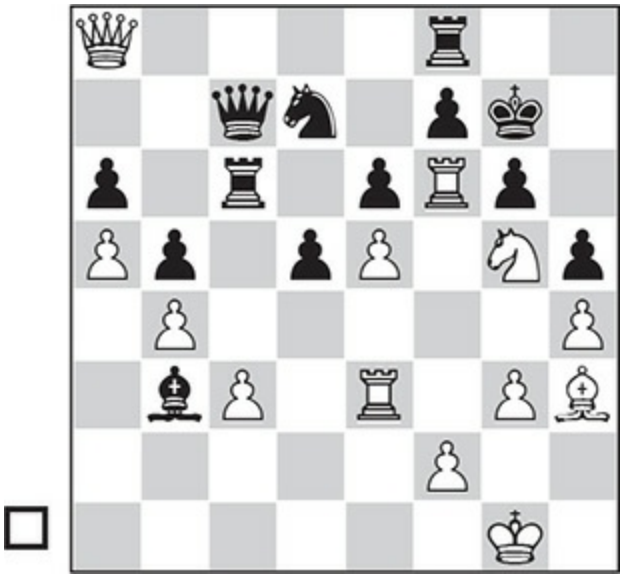
analysis diagram

Although this puts the white queen in an odd place, Black has to solve many problems to find peace:

C1) 39...♖c7? 40.♗xe6+-;

C2) 39...♖cc8 40.♗xe6+-;

C3) 39...♕c7? 40.♖e3? (the 2115 player completely missed 40.♗xe6! fxe6 41.♘xe6+ ♖xe6 42.♖xe6+-. When I asked him to refute 39....♕c7, he found 40.♗xe6! after a couple of minutes of thought. This kind of correcting of our own mistakes is very important. Initially, it is alright if the coach has to give indications where such corrections need to be made. But after a period of time, the player should be able to identify such critical moments to do the correction themselves. I then asked other players who were thinking about some other variations at that point to find the refutation of 39...♕c7, which everyone did within a few minutes. In this way, interesting ideas given by a player can be used for training purposes with the other students in the group) 40...♘d7?



analysis diagram

TASK 2: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

C31) 41.♘xe6+? fxe6 42.♖xf8 ♘xf8-+ was given by the 2115 player;

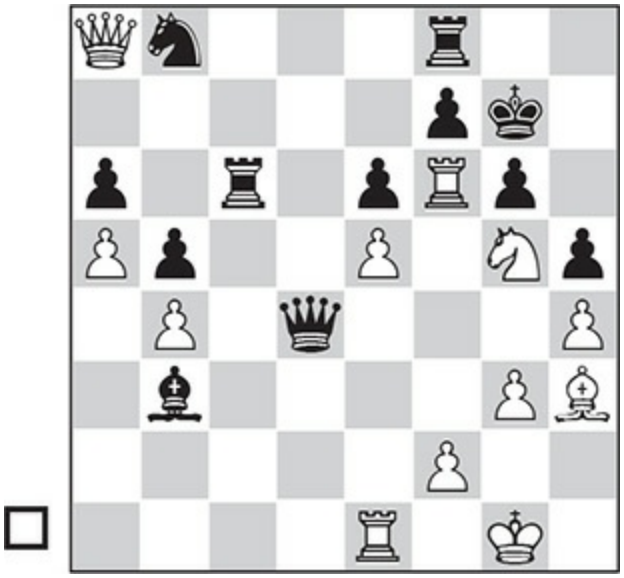
C32) 41.♖xf7+? ♖xf7 42.♘xf7 ♔xf7 43.♕h8, with the idea of 44.♖f3+, was suggested as a refutation by the 2115 player. I then asked him to find the defence for Black after 43.♕h8. He could not find the ...♗b3-c2-f5 idea. He simply forgot there was a bishop on b3. Forgetting certain pieces or pawns during analysis is quite common for an untrained mind: 43...♗c2! (43...♔e7? 44.♖f3? (44.♕g7+ ♔d8 45.♕g8+ ♔e7 46.♖f3+-) was given by the 2115 player, missing 44...♕xe5∓) 44.♖e2 ♗b1 45.♖e1 ♗d3 46.♖e3 ♗c2=;

C33) 41.♗xe6? ♘xe5!-+ was missed by the 1830 player, which is understandable (41...♘xf6? 42.exf6+ ♔g8 43.♗xf7+ ♕xf7 44.♕xc6 ♕xf6 45.♕xf6 ♖xf6 46.♖e6+-);

C34) 41.♕xf8+! ♘xf8 (41...♔xf8 42.♖xf7+ ♔e8 43.♗xe6+-) 42.♖ef3!+-.

C4) 39...d4! 40.cxd4 and now:

C41) 40...♕xd4?



analysis diagram

TASK 3*: Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

41.♖f4! (41.♗g2 ♖c7! 42.♖f4 ♕d2=; 41.♘xf7?! ♕c3!∞) 41...♕d8 42.♕a7! ♕c7 43.♕e3 ♖c3 44.♕d2 ♖c2 45.♕d1 ♖c3 46.♕a1!±;

C42) 40...♖c3? 41.♗xe6+-;

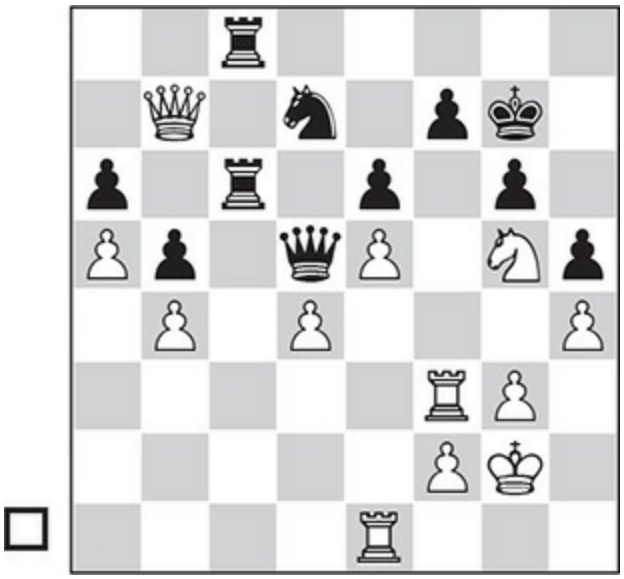
C43) 40...♗d5! (exploiting the odd position of White's queen and at the same time centralising his bishop) 41.♗g2 (otherwise, the white queen will be in trouble. At this point, the 1830 player could not find this move for White. This is another common problem for untrained players; when the opponent has a threat, they are unable to find resources to counter such threats effectively) 41...♗xg2 (41...♖c1? 42.♖xc1 ♗xa8 43.♗xa8 wins for White, for example 43...♕e7 44.♗e4 ♘d7 45.♖c7+-) 42.♔xg2 ♕d5+:

C431) 43.♔g1? ♘d7∓ (43...♖c1? 44.♖xc1 ♕xa8 45.♖c7+-);

C432) 43.♔h2!? ♘d7 44.♕b7 ♘xf6 45.exf6+ ♔g8!= (45...♔xf6? was given by the 1900 player, with the assessment that Black is winning. But he missed the follow-up. When asked to refute 45...♔xf6, he found 46.♖e4!+-, which is very good);

C433) 43.♖f3 ♘d7 44.♕b7 (44.♕a7 ♖fc8 45.♖e4 ♖8c7 46.♖xf7+ ♔g8 47.♕a8+ ♖c8 48.♕b7 ♖8c7=):

C4331) 44... ♖fc8?



analysis diagram

TASK 4*: Time to think: 3 minutes.*

45. ♖c1! ♖xc1 46. ♕xd5 exd5 47. ♖xf7+ ♔g8 48. ♖xd7+-;

C4332) 44... ♖b8 45. ♕a7 ♖bc8 (45... ♖c3 46. ♖ee3±). The d4-pawn prevents White's queen from escaping, enabling Black to make a draw: 46. ♔h2 ♖8c7 47. ♖xf7+ ♔g8 48. ♕a8+ ♖c8=.

The following position could have arisen in a game played by GM Praggnanandhaa against GM Bosiocic. Pragg chose a different move earlier in the game, so what we are about to see is only our analysis. I used this position in an online group session with a few of my students from the USA. There were four players with ages 11 to 14. The USCF ratings of the students were 2125, 1900, 1850 and 1735, respectively.

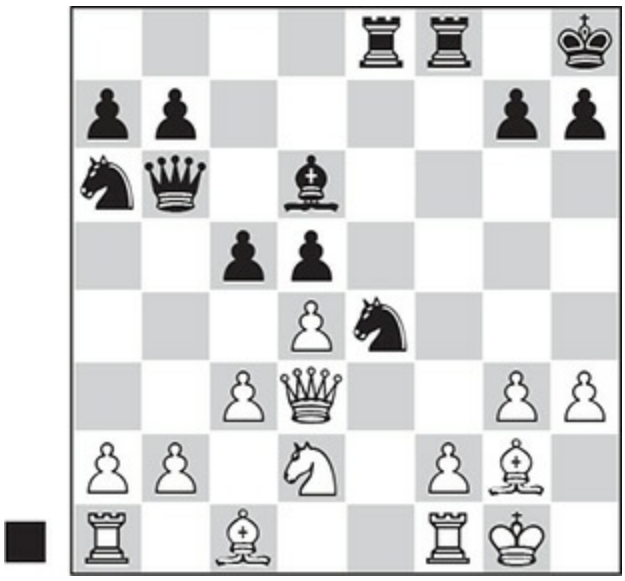
On the screen, the students can see only the initial position (some students use a physical chessboard with the initial position) for the full 90-minutes session. The analysis is done without moving pieces on the board, and the students send their analysis on the private chat window. The feedback is also given in the same way. No one knows what the other students have sent in.

Each student is on his own. Throughout the session, each student is analysing a completely different position in their mind. The students are at different phases of the analysis throughout the session and the feedback is given by the coach to their individual suggestions. This way, every student is getting considerable individual attention during a group session.
If a student completes the analysis of a position, he can be given the next position while others are still working on the previous position. This way, during the same group session, different students can be made to analyse different positions. It also means the coach should be able to give correct feedback under the challenging circumstances. It will also motivate the students to analyse quickly (the coach should ensure that the quality is not compromised in the process!) and go ahead of others in their analysis, improving the competitiveness. I would suggest the reader to do the same with all the positions in this book. Do not make any move on the board to the extent possible while you are analysing. Initially, this will be tough. At times it will be confusing, frustrating, and testing our patience a lot. Try to persist and you will improve your analytical skills permanently.
I have tried to give a clear picture of how the students were thinking, and of the kinds of mistakes they made in analysing these variations. From this, we can hopefully learn useful lessons that can guide us to make necessary corrections in our thinking process.

Game 37 Analysis with students

Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa	2515
Marin Bosiocic	2628

Gibraltar 2018 (9)



TASK 1*: Time to think: 10 minutes.*

White has an extra pawn and a pair of bishops, and the knight on a6 is misplaced. All White needs is time to get his undeveloped pieces into the game. Then it will all be over for Black. This means Black has to act quickly before White can implement his plan.

18...♘xf2!

18...cxd4? 19.♗xe4 (after we remove this centralised knight, Black does not have sufficient compensation for the pawn deficit) 19...dxe4 (19...dxc3 20.♕xd5 cxd2 21.♗xd2+-) 20.♘xe4±.

None of the students considered 18...cxd4 as a serious alternative in their analysis. They were all drawn to the obvious 18...♘xf2! sacrifice. In some ways, it is a good sign that they went for the most critical move in the position. Our mind should learn to be drawn towards the critical lines while analysing – like magnets to iron.

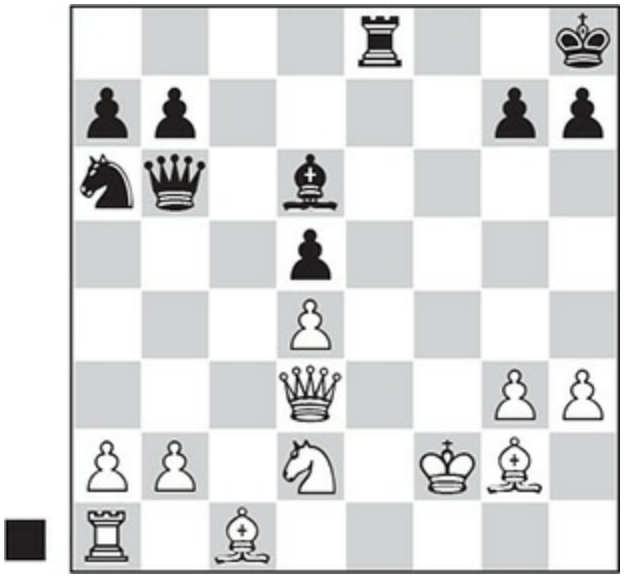
In other ways, it is also important that we do not exclude other possibilities in our analysis when we are attracted by one particular move or idea, however tempting it may be. Our likes and dislikes and our personal preferences should not dictate which move we will analyse and which one we will not (at least until we have reached a level where our analytical skills and intuition are very well developed or when we are running short of time). Sometimes, a

move that we do not like could be exactly what the position needs.

19.♖xf2 ♖xf2 20.♔xf2 cxd4

Since the white rook and bishop on the queenside are not yet developed, and the white king position is temporarily exposed, Black has a short time window to keep White engaged in the defence by making constant threats and not allowing White's undeveloped pieces to get back into the game.

21.cxd4



TASK 2*: Time to think: 5 minutes.*

Until now, the moves were more or less forced and obvious to all the students. The 1735 student got stuck here, and was not sure if he should continue. I suggested to him to keep looking for ways to continue the fight. An important point to note here is that he was given no clue whatsoever about the direction he should be looking in.

21...♘c5!

21...♘b4? was the first reaction from all the students, which is understandable. We have already invested some material and we would want to get something in return with the remaining units left on the board. 22.♕c3. The 1850 student missed this move and considered only 22.♕b1?? when 22...♕xd4+ wins for Black. This is understandable again. He was probably doing this kind of training for the first time and was not sure whether there

was a pawn on c3 or not. While everyone was considering 21...♘b4, the c3-pawn disappeared. After 21...♘b4 was played in the mind, it reappeared and 22.♕c3 was not possible anymore. At some places it is there, and suddenly it disappears. Players without good visualisation skills suffer from this a lot; pawns and pieces keep appearing and disappearing all the time and the position is very hazy.

Now we have two choices. We can give up, accept our current limitations and remain with average analytical skills throughout, or we can try to overcome our current limitations by pushing ourselves harder, try to do those that appear difficult with our current set of skills and grow stronger in the process. Trying to get better through our own effort is the key to growth.

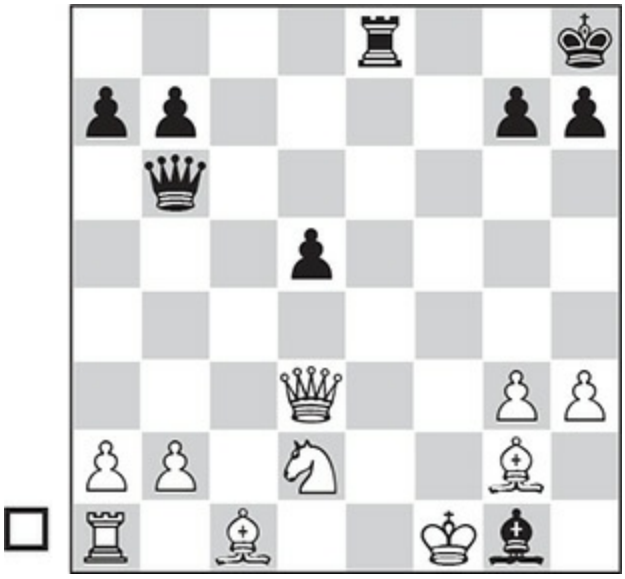
So we play 22.♕c3, and now 22...♘c2!? 23.♕xc2 ♕xd4+ 24.♔f1 ♗xg3 25.♘f3+-. The 1735 student saw this variation, which is fantastic in my opinion. What is important while analysing is that we come up with ideas and try to make them work. Sometimes they do and sometimes they don't. We keep trying different ideas and keep the effort going. In the process, we will make many mistakes, but we keep pushing. This is the process to grow in my opinion. I have seen many players go through this process and gradually become strong players.

Instead of the mistake 21...♘b4, 21...♗xg3+? 22.♔xg3 ♕d6+ 23.♔f2+- was found by the 1850 student. When inexperienced players begin to analyse a complex position without moving pieces, they initially come up with such 'too creative' suggestions. It is the excitement finding an outlet! Once they start doing this kind of training on a regular basis, this will go away and they will be able to calculate variations without mistakes.

22.dxc5 ♗xc5+ 23.♔f1 ♗g1!

23...♗f2? 24.♘f3 ♗xg3. The 2125 student stopped here, concluding that this position is winning for Black. He missed ♕c2 or ♕d2, defending against Black's threat. We can see two problems faced by the player. One is the difficulty in visualising the position as we go deeper into the lines. The position starts becoming hazy in our head and we lose track of the pieces and pawns. This makes it tough or impossible to either find the moves or evaluate them properly. If we show this position to the player on the board, he will be

able to find the 25.♕c2 or 25.♕d2 defence. To see it from afar is tough, but possible with regular training.



The 1850 student stopped here, concluding that Black is winning.

TASK 3*: Time to think: 5 minutes.*

24.♕f3

24.♕f5!? ♗h2 and now:

A) 25.♘f3?? – the 2125 student got stuck here. Me: 'In this line Black has a win, so find it.' He only gave 25...♗xg3? 26.♕c2+- and missed 25...♕a6+, which is winning for Black. This was mainly because the position was not clear in his head. Someone with better visualisation capabilities would be able to spot the winning continuation effortlessly since the move itself is not difficult to find: 26.♔f2 ♕e2#;

B) None of the students saw the defensive resource 25.♗e4!. If we don't see a move like 24.♕f3, we will be required to find such tough resources, which is not easy. In this instance, it is not so bad to miss the resource 25.♗e4!, since we had an easier-to-find alternative that fortunately works for us.

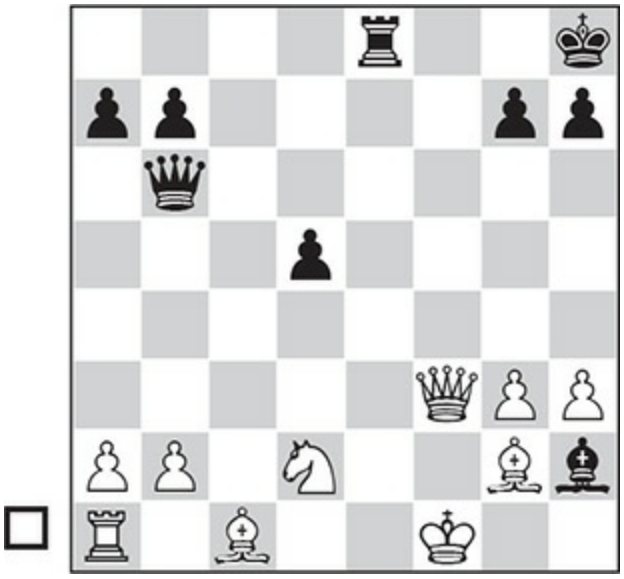
25...dxe4 26.♘xe4 ♕g1+ 27.♔e2 ♗xg3 28.♔f3! (this king walk is psychologically tough to find; 28.♗e3?? ♕xa1 29.♘xg3 ♕xb2+, and White

will lose most of his pawns) 28...♗h4 (28...♕f1+?? 29.♔g4+-) 29.♗h6! ♕xa1 30.♗xg7+ ♔xg7 31.♕d7+ ♖e7 32.♕g4+ and White survives with perpetual check.

24...♗h2!

Black is winning according to the 1900 student.

24...♕b5+? 25.♔xg1 ♖e1+ was suggested by the 1850 student. He completely missed 26.♘f1 or 26.♔h2 for White. The visualisation becoming tough is the main reason. Moreover, when we do this kind of training without moving pieces on the board, it will be very tough for the player initially. That is why it is better to start with easy ones and gradually move on to tougher ones. The choice of positions for this kind of training is critical. A position that is too tough will demotivate the student. If a position is too easy, the player will not find it challenging enough.



TASK 4*: Time to think: 5 minutes.*

Most of the students got stuck here. The 2125 player got desperate and said 25.♗e3, which is an illegal move, forgetting that White's knight is still on d2! When we make such mistakes during this kind of training, it is important that the player is not ridiculed and such mistakes are accepted without passing judgement. Players make different types of mistakes in training.

What is more important is that the effort from the student is good enough and it gets the appreciation it deserves.

Nothing motivates a student like timely praise from the coach, parents or others. I have seen many coaches who are hesitant to praise their students, as they fear that it will go to their heads and the students will begin to think they do not have to raise their efforts any further, since their current efforts are already appreciated. But it works the other way in practice. When players are praised, deservingly, it motivates them to raise their effort from then on to meet the new standards they set themselves. Most coaches keep harping on the negatives and weaknesses in their students, and it simply reinforces those perceived weaknesses in their students.

25.♘e4!

The 2125 and 1850 players did not find this move for a long time.

The 1850 player suggested 25.♕f2?, missing 25...♕b5+-+.

25...dxe4

The 1900 player considered only 25...♕g1+?, missing 25...dxe4. There could follow 26.♔e2 ♖xe4+ (26...dxe4? 27.♕f2+-; the 2125 player claimed Black was winning after 27.♕f1 ♕d4, missing 27.♕f2 completely) 27.♗e3 (27.♔d2? – the 1900 player missed 27.♗e3 – 27...♕e1+ 28.♔c2 ♖e2+?? 29.♔b3 ♕b4+).

The 2125 player to me: ‘I don’t see a continuation for Black here. I am lost what to do at this point.’ Me: ‘25...♕g1+ was the mistake; find something else for Black.’

We can observe a few pertinent things here: the player sees a variation, it does not work, and he gets stuck, not knowing what to do. This may sound all too familiar to many of us. Why does this happen and what should one do when this happens?

It happens because the player is not sure whether the moves that went before the moment he got stuck were correct or not. It also happens because the player did not have any alternatives pre-identified. When he saw 25...♕g1+, before committing himself to analyse it in detail, he should either have told himself that this move is not forced and he would come back to this exact moment to look for alternatives, or identify alternatives then and there, and

then started analysing 25...♕g1+. Had he done this, when he realised that 25...♕g1+ does not work, he could have looked at the alternatives instead of feeling lost.

27...♖xe3+ 28.♕xe3 ♕xg2+ and now:

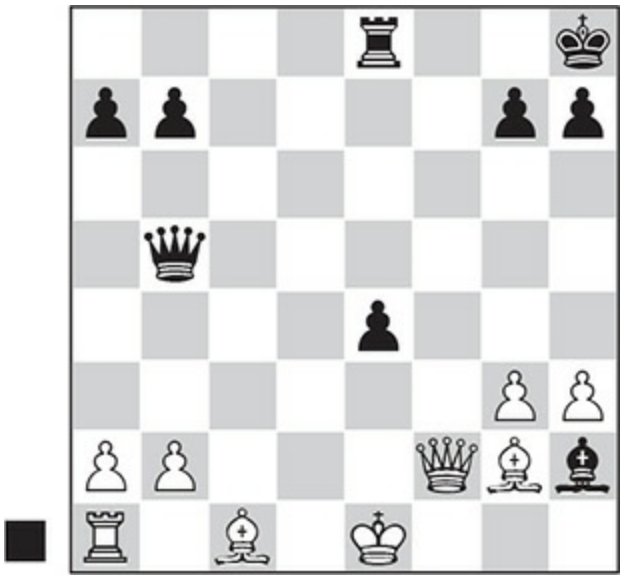
A) 29.♔d3 ♕e4+ 30.♕xe4 dxe4+ 31.♔xe4 ♗xg3+-. Me: 'Find where Black made a mistake in this line.' 1900 to me: 'Black is slightly worse and has two pawns for the exchange' (Black is completely lost and has only one pawn for the exchange);

B) 29.♕f2 ♕e4+ 30.♔d2 ♕b4+ 31.♔d1 ♗xg3 32.♖c1+-.

26.♕e3

The 1850 and 2125 players missed this and considered only 26.♕f2 here. The students took 90 minutes to come to this point.

26.♕f2? was given without any assessment by the 1850 player. Me: 'Find out why 26.♕f2 is losing.' 1850 to me: 'When you do the calculation, are you able to see the new locations of the pieces clearly in your mind?' Me: 'This is what we are trying to improve by solving without moving pieces. When you forget where the pieces are, start from the beginning and go over the variation slowly in your mind. You will get better, so don't worry.' 1850 to me: 'Looks like I have to be careful of what moves I say or else I'll have to find the counter also!' 26...♕b5+ 27.♔e1



analysis diagram

TASK 5*: Time to think: 3 minutes.*

27...e3! 28.♗xe3.

1850 to me: ‘How is Black better here?’ Me: ‘Find it!’

A) 28...♕d3?! looks very tempting, but it is not the best continuation. Looks can be very deceiving in chess! 29.♕d2 ♖xe3+ 30.♔d1 ♕xd2+ 31.♔xd2 ♖xg3 32.♗f1;

B) 28...♕b4+? is bad...

B1) due to the simple 29.♔f1+-. Now: 29...♖f8. 1850 to me: ‘I thought this was winning for Black’, missing 30.♗f3 completely;

B2) 29.♔d1? – 1850 to me: ‘Not sure what is going on here.’ He could not conclude that probably 28...♕b4 was the mistake, since both 29.♔f1 and 29.♔d1 do not win for Black: 29...♖d8+ 30.♗d2 ♕xb2 31.♖c1 ♗xg3 32.♕e3 ♕xa2∞.

C) 28...♗g1! 29.♕xg1 ♕d3 – Black’s attack finally crashes through!

26...♖f8+

26...♕a6+? 27.♔e1±.

During this 90-minute online session with a group of students, we can see many interesting pointers to how players in a certain rating range think, what issues they face, how it affects them, and so on. After a few days of similar traning, all these players will be able to visualise much better than when they began. This also means they are now in a position to find moves in positions that are further away than the current one on the board. This gives a player a distinct advantage over the board. We will see subsequently the practical problems players face while calculating variations and some suggestions on how they can be overcome.

27.♔e2!

27.♔e1? ♕d6!∓.

27...♕a6+!?

27...♕b5+ would transpose to similar variations as after 27...♕a6.

28.♔d1 ♖d8+ 29.♔c2

29.♔e1? ♖d3-+.

29...♕c4+

29...♗g1? 30.♕xe4+-.

30.♔b1

30.♕c3? ♕e2+-+.

30...♖d1

Despite being a piece down, Black has sufficient compensation, mainly due to the odd position of the ♖a1 and Black's active pieces.

31.a3!

A) 31.♕c3? ♕d3+;

B) 31.b3?! ♕d3+ 32.♔b2 ♗xg3 33.♕c5 ♕e2+ 34.♔b1 (34.♔a3? ♗d6-+) 34...♕d3+=.

31...♕d3+

31...♗xg3? 32.♗xe4 ♖xc1+ (32...♗f2 33.♕f4) 33.♕xc1 ♕xe4+ 34.♕c2 ♕e6 35.♕d1+-; 31...♗g1 32.♕c3+-.

32.♔a2 ♕c4+ 33.♕b3 ♖xc1

33...♕xb3+ 34.♔xb3 e3 35.♗f3 ♖e1 36.♔c3 ♗xg3 37.♔d3±.

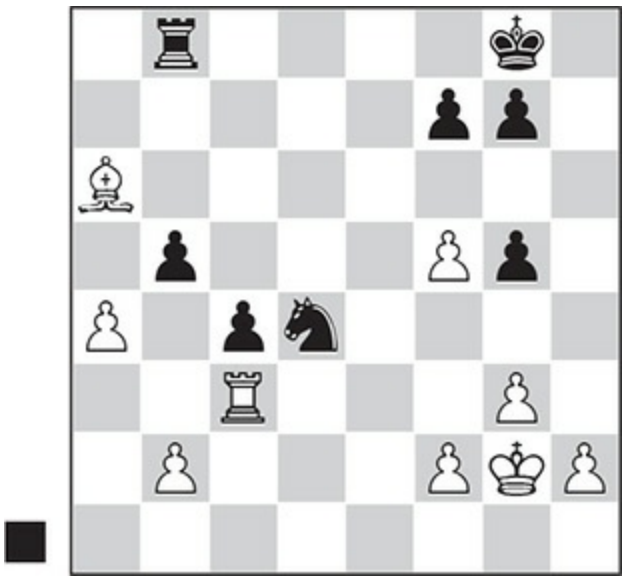
34.♖xc1 ♕xc1 35.♗xe4 ♕c7±

Black should be able to make an easy draw here.

Let us now see an interesting endgame where Black missed a simple drawing mechanism and paid the price for it. One reason to choose this position is to

showcase that even in so-called ‘boring’ endgames, there are infinite hidden possibilities, waiting for a capable mind to unravel them all.
One of the mistakes many players make is to not identify the critical moments in the game and instead play moves that look logical. While defending slightly worse positions, it makes sense to keep looking for opportunities that can give us what we want in a forceful manner, rather than prolonging the game unnecessarily and giving us more chances to go wrong later and even lose the game in the process, as happened in this game.
One reason why players miss critical moments is that identifying and analysing critical positions in detail requires the player to spend more time/energy/effort. Hence, it is tempting and easier to play a move that apparently does not lose immediately and maintains the status quo. The problem with this approach is that, when we miss critical moments early on, the position will gradually deteriorate in small doses, and we will soon reach a point when the player has to start finding only moves, which will be much harder to find and analyse. Most players falter at this stage and lose the game eventually.

Game 38 Level 5
Konstantin Sakaev
Ramesh RB
Linares 2001 (2)



TASK 1*: Time to think: 3 minutes.*

32...bxa4?!

32...♖b6! leads to a simple draw for Black. Just keep attacking the bishop, force White to take on b5, and reach a drawn rook and pawn ending: 33.♗c8 ♖b8 34.♗a6 (34.♗d7 ♖b7 35.♗e8 ♖b8) 34...♖b6 35.axb5 ♘xb5 36.♗xb5 ♖xb5 37.♖xc4 (37.♖c2 ♖b3 38.♔f1 f6 39.♔e2 ♔f7 40.♔d2 ♔e7 41.♔c1 ♖b4 42.♖e2+ ♔d6=) 37...♖xb2=.

33.♖xc4 ♘xf5

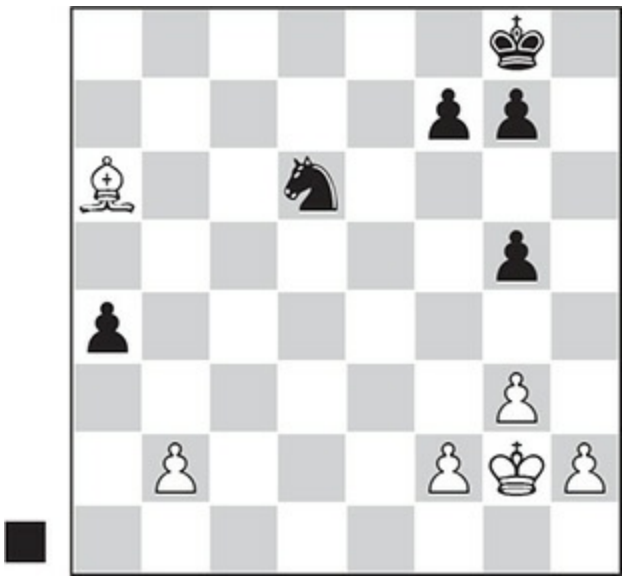
33...♘b3? 34.♖c7 (threatening 35.♗c4) 34...♘a5 35.♖c5! ♘b3 36.♖d5!. The rook dominates the ♘b3, which indirectly keeps the b2-pawn from coming under attack and at the same time gives White time to improve the position of his bishop.

34.♖c8+! ♖xc8 35.♗xc8 ♘d6

After Black's incorrect 32nd move, this position is reached more or less by force. The resulting ending is practically very difficult to hold for Black.

36.♗a6!

After 36.♗d7? ♘c4 37.♗xa4 ♘xb2 38.♗b5 ♘d1, the knight escapes and it will be a draw.



TASK 2*: Try to save this position for Black. Time to think: 10 minutes.*

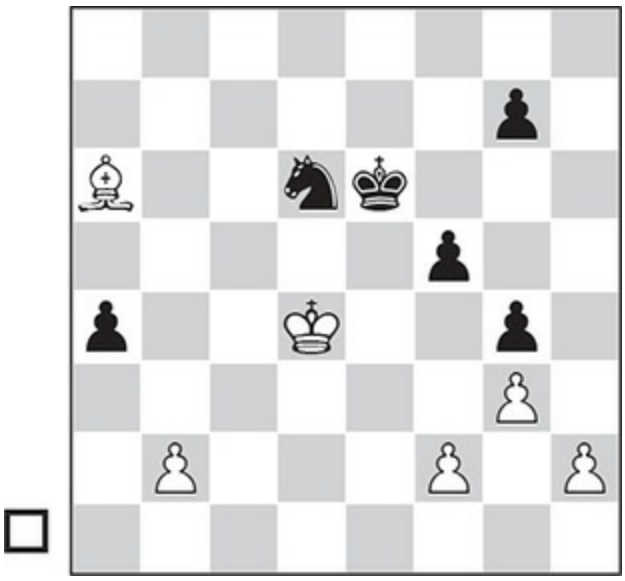
36...♔f8?!

A) 36...f5! and now:

A1) 37.f4 gxf4 38.gxf4 ♔f7 39.♔f3 ♔e6 40.♔e3 (40.♗d3 ♔d5) 40...♔d5 41.♔d3 g6=. Surprisingly, if Black can park all his pawns in this manner (on the same colour as the opponent's bishop), his chances to save the game increase! Although the pawns become weak, they fix the opponent's pawns on black, and they cannot be easily defended by White when they are attacked;

A2) 37.♔f3 ♔f7 38.♔e3 and now:

A21) The move order is very important; after 38...♔e6?? 39.♔d4! g4, it looks like Black has achieved his objective on the kingside with his pawn placement, but it is White's turn and he is able to exploit the cracks in Black's position with pinpoint play.



analysis diagram

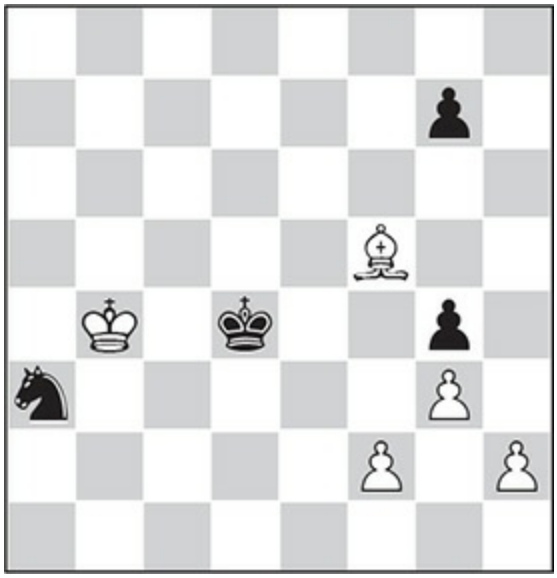
TASK 3*: Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

40.♗c4+!, driving the king away: 40...♔f6 41.♗d3! (threatening 42.♔d5; if 41.♔c5 ♘e4+) 41...♔e6. In this position, White will want to attack the a4-pawn with his bishop from c2 or with his king. If the white king goes after the a4-pawn, Black will try to create counterplay with ...♔e6-e5-d4 ideas, combining with either ...♘e4 or ...♘c4, attacking White's weak pawns on f2 and b2. If White tries to attack the a4-pawn with ♗c2, he should take care of ...a4-a3 followed by ...♘b5 check, winning back the pawn.

A211) 42.♔c5? allows Black to activate his own king in return and get decent counterplay: 42...♔e5! 43.♗c2 (43.♔b4 ♔d4 44.♗c2 ♘c4 (44...g6? 45.♔xa4+-) 45.♗xf5 ♘xb2 and the kingside pawns will soon fall, ending in a draw) 43...♘e4+! 44.♗xe4 (44.♔b4 ♘xf2 45.♔xa4 g5=, as Black manages to create his own passed pawn) 44...♔xe4 45.♔b4 ♔f3 46.♔xa4 ♔xf2 47.b4 g5 48.b5 f4 49.b6 f3 50.b7 ♔g1 51.b8♕ f2 52.♕b6 ♔g2, making a comfortable draw;

A212) 42.♗c2 a3!? (42...g6 43.♗xa4 ♘e4 44.♔e3+-) 43.bxa3 ♘b5+ 44.♔c5 ♘xa3 45.♗d3 (trapping the unfortunate knight in the corner) 45...♔e5 46.♔b4 ♔d4 47.♗xf5. This is possible because Black does not

have a pawn on g6. That is why it was important for Black to have started with ...g5-g4, ...f7-f5 and ...g7-g6 earlier, instead of bringing his king forward on move 38.



analysis diagram

White has won a couple of pawns, but he should be careful to not allow Black access to his pawns, and bring his king to the scene of action at the earliest: 47...♘c4 48.♗xg4 ♘d2 (48...♘d6 49.♗f3!+-; 48...♘e5 49.♗e2+-) 49.♗f5!+- (49.♗e2? ♘e4 50.f4 ♔e3=), for example 49...g5 50.h3 ♘f3 51.♔b5 ♔d5 52.♗g4 ♘d2 53.♗c8 ♔d4 54.♗b7, and eventually White will bring his king to the kingside and win.

A22) 38...g4! and now:

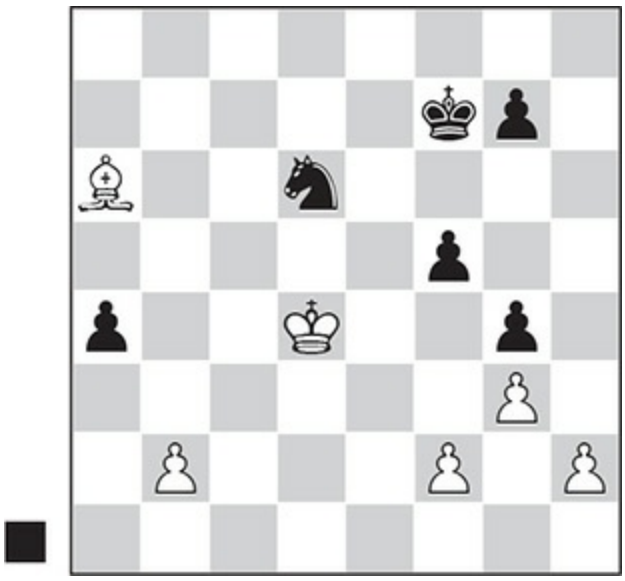
A221) 39.♗d3 ♔e6 40.♔d4 g5? (this unnecessarily ties down one of his pieces to the defence of the f5-pawn; 40...g6! is a better move order) 41.♗c2 a3 42.bxa3 ♘b5+ 43.♔c5 ♘xa3 44.♗d3 ♔e5 45.♔b4 ♔d4 46.♗xf5 ♘c4 47.♗xg4

A2211) 47...♘d6 48.♗f3+-;

A2212) 47...♘e5 48.♗f5! (48.♗e2 g4!=) 48...g4 49.♔b5! ♔d5 (49...♘d3 50.♗xd3+-) 50.♔b6 ♔d6 51.♗e4+-;

A2213) 47...♘d2 48.♗f5+- is similar to the line we saw earlier.

A222) 39.♔d4



analysis diagram

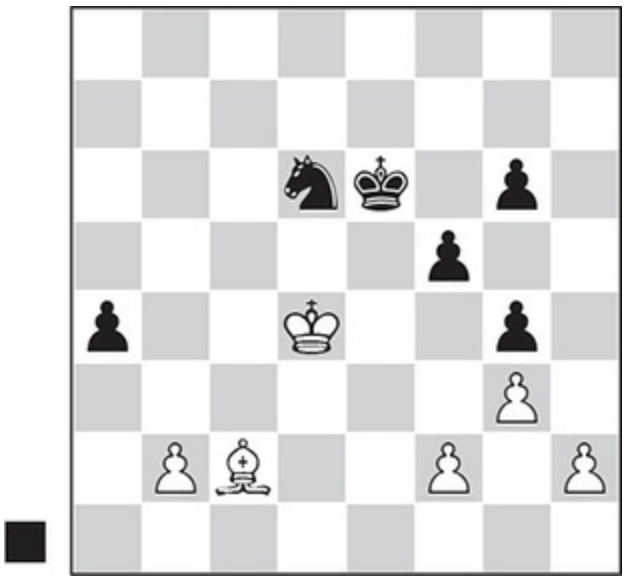
TASK 4*: Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

A2221) 39...♘e4! is possible but quite risky: 40.♗b5 ♘xf2 41.♗xa4 ♕e7! (keeping the e6-square vacant for the knight; 41...♕e6 42.♗c2! is also risky but Black can hold with accurate play; 41...♘e4?? 42.♗c2+-; 41...g5? 42.♕e5 f4 43.♕f5!+-*)* 42.♗c2 g6 43.♕e5 ♘h3! (the knight is en route to f3) 44.b4 ♘g1 45.♕f4 ♘h3+ 46.♕e3 ♘g1 47.♗d1 ♕d6=;

A2222) 39...♕e6? 40.♗c4+! ♕f6 41.♗d3+-, we have seen this earlier;

A2223) 39...g6! gives the ideal pawn structure for Black on the kingside. It's not easy to attack the base pawn on g6, while it is easy for Black to attack either the b2- or f2-pawn with his knight: 40.♗d3 ♕e6!

A22231) 41.♗c2



analysis diagram

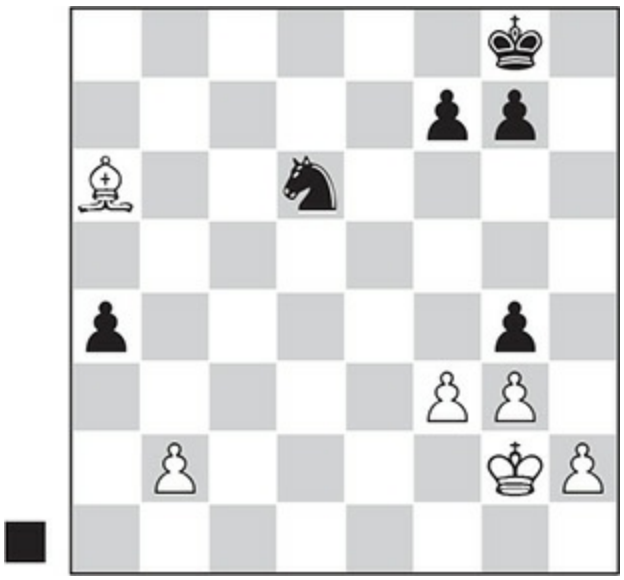
TASK 5*: Time to think: 3 minutes.*

41...a3! 42.bxa3 ♘b5+ 43.♔c5 ♘xa3 44.♗d3 ♔e5 45.♔b4 ♔d4=. Here we can see the usefulness of including ...g7-g6 on move 39, as ♗f5 is not possible anymore;

A22232) 41.♔c5 ♔e5! 42.♔b4 ♔d4, and the king activity saves the day for Black: 43.♗e2 (after 43.♗c2? ♘c4, Black could even play for more) 43...♘e4 (the drawback of 43.♗e2) 44.♔xa4 (44.f3 gxf3 45.♗xf3 ♔e3 46.♗d1 g5 47.♔xa4 f4 48.gxf4 gxf4 49.♗h5 f3 50.♗xf3 ♔xf3 with an easy draw) 44...♘xf2 (the simplest way to make peace; 44...♘c3+!? is a clever but slightly risky way to make a draw: 45.bxc3+ ♔xc3 46.f3 gxf3! 47.♗xf3 ♔d3! (47...g5?? 48.♔b5 ♔d4 49.♔c6 ♔e3 50.♗h1 g4 (50...♔f2 51.h4+-) 51.♔d5 f4 (51...♔f2 52.♔e5) 52.♔e5! f3 53.♔f5+-) 48.♔b4 ♔e3 49.♗g2 ♔f2 50.♗h3!? f4 (50...♔g1?? 51.♗xf5! gxf5 (51...♔xh2 52.g4+-) 52.h4+-) 51.gxf4 ♔e3 52.♗g4 (52.f5 gxf5 53.♗xf5 ♔f4=) 52...♔xf4 53.h3 g5=) 45.b4 ♔e3 46.♗a6 ♘e4 47.b5 ♘c3+ 48.♔b4 ♘xb5 49.♗xb5 ♔f3, and this should end in a draw soon.

B) In the position of **TASK 2**, 36...g4!? is another way of getting the g4/f5/g6 set-up, which helps Black to achieve the draw easily. With all these

different move orders, I am also trying to show that not everything that looks similar is the same. There are tiny nuances and move order tricks we need to be aware of while analysing. Paying attention to details should be second nature, which we can cultivate by deeply analysing many interesting positions. The aim is also to show that there are many hidden resources in most positions, and it is a question whether our capabilities are sufficient or not to bring out all those resources into the open.
37.f3



analysis diagram

TASK 6*: Time to think: 5 minutes.*

B1) The obvious drawback of 37...f5? is that the black pawns become too loose and separate from each other. But it still requires White to be accurate: 38.fxg4 fxg4 39.♕f2 ♕f7 40.♕e3 ♕e6 and now:

B11) Directly going after the g4-pawn with 41.♕f4? lets Black escape by counterplay on the other side of the board: 41...♕d5 42.♕xg4 ♕c5 43.♕f3 (43.♕f4?? ♘c4-+) 43...♘c4 44.♕e2 ♘xb2 45.♕d2=;

B12) 41.♕d4!. White goes after the a4-pawn. Black is not able to attack the h2-pawn as the g4-square is taken away by Black's own pawn and the f1-square is under the white bishop's control, which simply means no

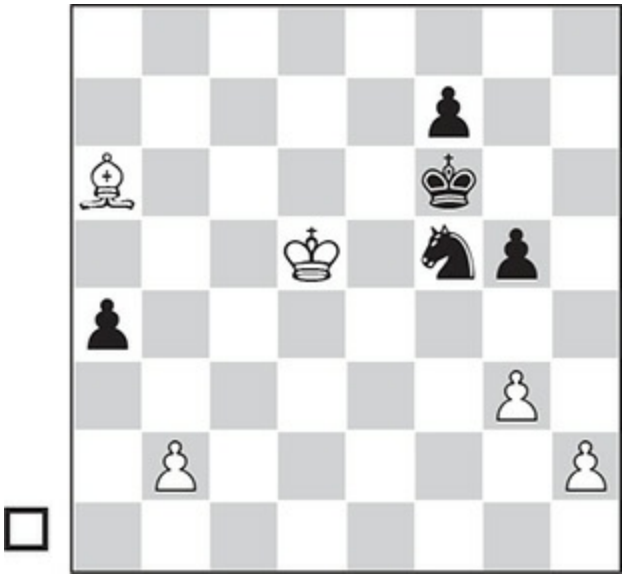
counterplay: 41...♘f5+ 42.♔c5 ♘e3 43.♔b4 ♘d1 44.♗e2!+-.

B2) 37...♘f5? 38.♔f2!+-;

B3) 37...gxf3+! 38.♔xf3 and now:

B31) 38...♔f8!? is good enough to draw but requires more accuracy;

B32) 38...g5? 39.♔e3 ♔g7 (39...f5 makes White's job easy: 40.♔d4 ♔f7 41.♔e5 ♔e7 42.♗d3+-) 40.♔d4 ♔f6 41.♔d5 ♘f5 (41... ♔e7 42.♗d3 and again the bishop is dominating the knight, e.g. 42...f5 43.♔e5+-)



analysis diagram

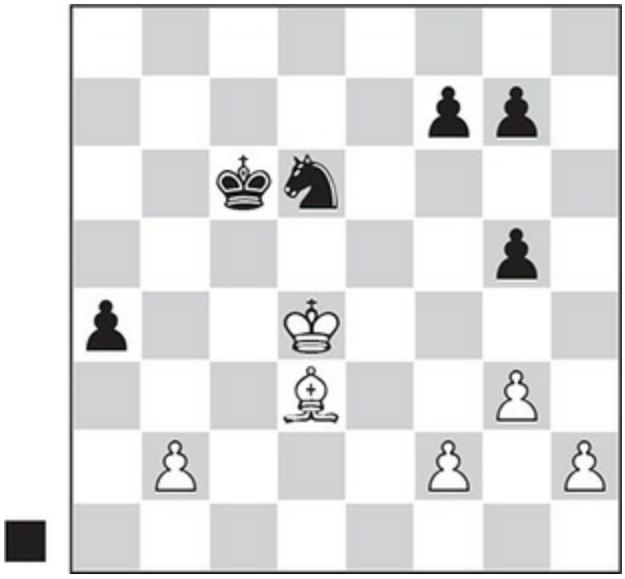
TASK 7*: Time to think: 5 minutes.*

42.♗e2! is very important (42.♗d3? ♘e3+ 43.♔c5 (43.♔e4 ♘d1=) 43...♘d1!? (43...♔e5!?=) 44.♗e2 ♘xb2 45.♔b4 ♔e5! 46.♔a3 f5 47.♔xb2 ♔e4=): 42...♘e3+ 43.♔e4. Now we see the benefit of playing the bishop to e2 instead of d3, as the knight is dominated: 43...♘f5 44.♗d1 and the a4-pawn is lost;

B33) 38...f6!? 39.♔e3 ♔f7 40.♔d4 ♔e6 41.♗d3 (41.♔c5 ♘e4+ 42.♔b4 f5 43.♔xa4 ♘c5+ 44.♔b5 ♘xa6 45.♔xa6 g5 46.♔b5 ♔d5 47.♔b4 ♔d4 48.h4!=) 41...f5 42.h4 g6 (Black has achieved his objective) 43.♗c2 (43.♔c5 ♘e4+ 44.♔d4 (44.♗xe4?? fxe4-+) 44...♘xg3 45.♗c2=) 43...a3! 44.bxa3 ♘b5+ 45.♔c5 (45.♔e3 ♘xa3 46.♗d3 ♔f6 47.♔f4 ♔f7

48.♕e5 ♕e7=) 45...♘xa3 46.♗d3 ♕e5! (46...♕f6 47.♕b4) 47.♕b4 (47.♗e2 ♘c2) 47...♕d4 (47...f4!? 48.g4 f3 49.♕xa3 (49.♗xg6?? ♕d4!-+) 49...♕f4 50.g5 ♕g4=) 48.♗xf5 gxf5 49.♕xa3 ♕e5 (49...♕e3?? 50.h5+-) 50.♕b3 f4! 51.gxf4+ ♕xf4, and Black just about survives.

37.♕f3 ♕e7 38.♕e3 ♕d7 39.♕d4 ♕c6 40.♗d3



TASK 8*: Time to think: 3 minutes.*

40...f6?

With 40...g4!, Black could still reach his ideal structure on the kingside, but Black is still not aware of the problems in the position or does not have the skill to solve them: 41.♗e2 (41.♕e5?? ♕c5-+) 41...f5 (41...♘b5+ 42.♕e5 ♘d6 43.♕f4 ♕c5 44.♕xg4?? ♘c4-+) 42.♗d3 g6=.

41.h3!?

41.♗c2+-.

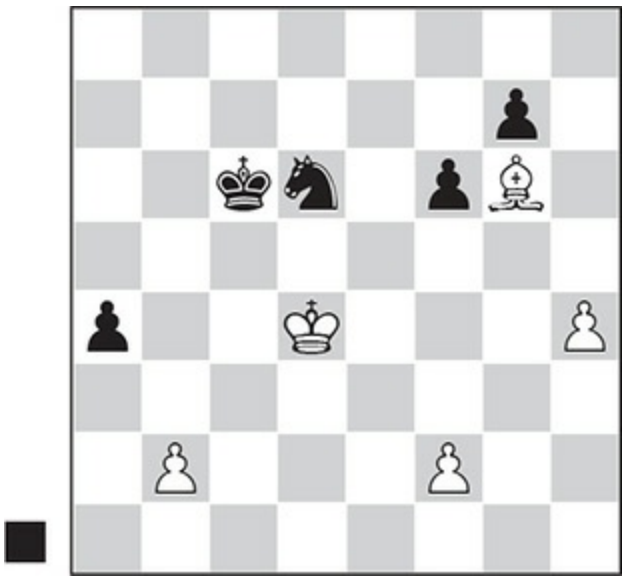
41...♘f7 42.♗g6 ♘d6

42...♘e5 43.♗e8+.

43.h4?

This could have spoiled everything had Black used the opportunity that came his way. 43.♗c2 would have won easily, e.g. 43...♘b5+ 44.♕c4 ♘d6+ 45.♕b4+-.

43...gxh4 44.gxh4



TASK 9*: Time to think: 5 minutes.*

44...♔b6?

The final mistake in the game.

44...f5! and now:

A) 45.f4 ♔b5 46.♗h5 ♔b4 47.♗d1 ♘e4 48.♔e5 ♘f2 49.♗c2 ♘g4+ 50.♔d4 ♘f6=;

B) 45.♗h5 ♔d7! 46.♗e2 (46.♗d1 ♘b5+! 47.♔c5 a3 48.bxa3 ♘xa3=; 46.♗f3 a3 47.bxa3 ♘b5+=) 46...♔e6=;

C) 45.h5 ♔d7! 46.♔d5 ♔e7 47.f3 ♔d7⇆.

45.♔d5 ♔c7 46.♗c2 1-0

CHAPTER 3

The analytical process

Chess is the art of analysis – Mikhail Botvinnik.

What does a player need to do to play good-quality chess?

To put it simply, all that a chess player must do is find the best move possible, to the best of his ability, in any given situation, and play it! And do it consistently, move after move, game after game, tournament after tournament, year after year. If only things were so simple!

In the above observation, the player's ability is the elephant in the room. An important question is: if given equal opportunity, training, infrastructure, time, support etc., can everyone learn everything equally well? Or can everyone know the same thing equally well? Can everyone be a good swimmer, singer, golf player, scientist, social worker or mediator when all external things are equal? Do not an individual's personality, learning capacity, interest, likes and dislikes etc., play a role in how well or poorly an individual learns and grows?

In most cases, the right questions and an honest attempt to try to find the solutions to the questions are more relevant to the process of learning than the solutions themselves. In the process of trying to find the truth, if we consider the various dimensions of the issue concerned and are willing to change our perspectives, the learning has taken place, hasn't it?

Our work should improve our ability to analyse any position efficiently and take correct decisions. Instead of preparing only to achieve our target, like titles, rating etc., we should also prepare to improve our analytical skills.

Game 39 Level 5
Ramesh RB 2466

Surya Sekhar Ganguly 2531

Jamshedpur 2003 (2)

This game was played in 2003, the year I became a grandmaster. Back then, I was already heavily engaged in chess coaching and was focusing less and less in upgrading my own skills as a player. It began to have its impact most heavily on my calculation skills, which were one of my strengths until then. It just goes to show that the work we do to improve our skills should be done with full involvement and without reservations. The priorities for a player should be absolute, to keep upgrading his skills throughout his playing career. It happens once in a while that a player can lose his motivation to keep working on his chess and his mind starts wandering. It is important for a player to learn to compartmentalise his priorities in life, so one interest does not impact another adversely.

Regarding using the positions given in this book, I would urge players who are very much motivated to try to go through all these analyses in their mind, starting with easy positions and then going on to the tougher ones. I normally give the position at move 18 and we try to work out all the variations and sub-variations in our mind without moving pieces; it will be very exciting and instructive!

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 b5 6.♗b3 ♗c5 7.a4 ♖b8 8.c3 d6 9.d4 ♗b6 10.axb5 axb5 11.♘a3 0-0 12.♘xb5

A topical line in those days. Ganguly was already an expert in this line from the black side, and I generally liked to go for the most principled continuations in my games.

12...exd4 13.cxd4 ♗g4 14.♖a3 ♖e8 15.♖e1 ♕d7 16.♗a4!?

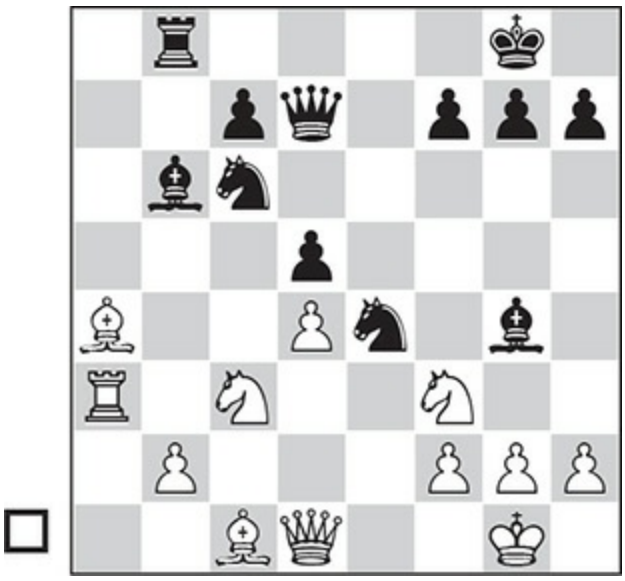
To exploit the drawback of 15...♕d7, at the cost of the extra pawn.

16...♖xe4

16...♘xe4!? 17.h3! ♗h5 (17...♗xf3 18.♖xf3 d5 19.♘c3 h6 20.♗f4±) 18.♗e3! (18.♘c3±) 18...d5 19.♘c3! ♗xf3 20.♕xf3 ♖e6 21.♖d1±.

17.♖xe4 ♘xe4 18.♘c3! d5

18...♕e8?, with the idea to get out of the pin with ...♗d7 and at the same time protecting the ♘e4, is met with 19.♕e1! (there are other ways to get an advantage for White, one option being 19.♘d5 ♗d7 20.♖e3!; Black manages to get out of one pin but gets into another!) 19...♗xf3 20.gxf3 ♘xc3 21.♕xe8+ ♖xe8 22.♗xc6!; White wins big material.



The first critical moment.

TASK 1: *Find a strong continuation for White. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

19.♘e2!

One of the moves I am proud to have played. There is nothing spectacular about it. It just happens that we feel good about certain moves. The challenge for White is how to effectively take advantage of the pin along the a4-e8 diagonal, handle the pressure on the d4-pawn, and handle the counterpin along the g4-d1 diagonal. This move helps in addressing all of these concerns. White is threatening moves like ♘e5, ♕c2 and also ♗xc6, ...♕c6, ♘e5 ideas.

The direct approach backfires badly for White: 19.♗xc6?! ♕xc6 20.♘e5? ♕xc3!-+.

The strange-looking 19.♘a2!? also makes sense if we go deep into the position: 19...♕d6 20.♗xc6 ♕xc6 21.♘e5 ♗xd1 22.♘xc6 ♖e8 23.♗e3, and White keeps a small advantage. One of the problems for Black in this opening is whether he will be able to activate his ♗b6 or not. If he fails to do this, he will be worse.

Try to spend some time here and find a good way for Black to handle the pin.

19...h5?

Not the best move in the position.

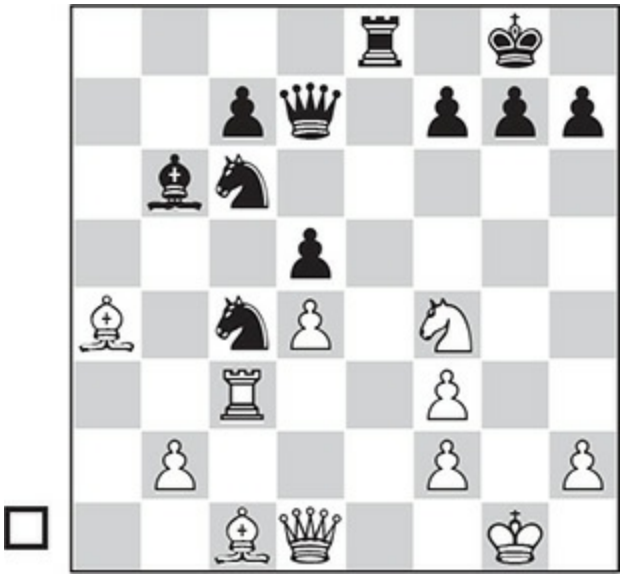
A) 19...f6? (to stop ♘e5 ideas) 20.♕c2 ♘b4 21.♗xd7 ♘xc2 22.♗xg4 ♘xa3 23.♗e6+! (an important intermediate move – if we manage to find such moves in our analysis, it is a sign of things going in the right direction; 23.bxa3 ♕f7±) 23...♔f8 24.♗xd5 (another intermediate move!) 24...f5 25.bxa3+-;

B) 19...♗xf3! is the best move, but a lot of variations should be calculated to come to this conclusion: 20.gxf3 ♘d6 21.♖c3 ♘c4:

B1) 22.♖xc4?! dxc4 23.d5 wins some material for White but Black's pieces come to life as well. 23...♕f5 24.♗xc6 ♕xf3∞ gives sufficient counterplay;

B2) The point of 22.♘f4!? is to take on c4 followed by d4-d5, as was seen earlier. It also denies access the e6-square for the black rook.

B21) 22...♖e8?



analysis diagram

TASK 2*: Find the correct continuation for White. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

B211) 23.♖xc4? backfires badly for White: 23...dxc4 24.d5 ♕e7!-+;

B212) 23.b3?! ♗a5! exploits the drawback of 23.b3 and improves the coordination between Black's pieces (if 23...♘4a5, 24.♗e3 closes the counterplay related to the open e-file): 24.bxc4, and White is forced to give

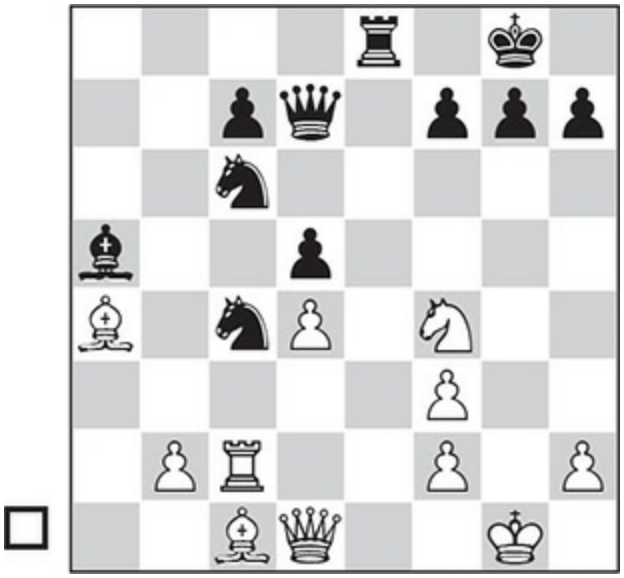
up material but obtains good compensation in return, e.g. 24...♗xc3 25.♗e3 ♕d6 26.♘xd5∞. But playing for compensation is clearly a step down from our ambition to play for a win;

B213) 23.♔g2!? removes the king from the first rank to avoid the threat of ...♗a5 followed by ...♖e1 coming with check. Such prophylactic moves should also be found during our calculations in complicated positions. Even though we give priority to forcing moves in our calculations, occasionally quiet moves have to be played to meet the peculiar needs of the position. 23...♗a5!:

B2131) 24.♖c2 ♖e1 25.♕d3 (threatening to play 26.b3) 25...♕d8! (a typical way to get out of the pin and include the queen in an attack on the white king) 26.♘xd5! (stopping the ...♕g5 check as well as undermining the position of the ♘c4) 26...♖xc1! (if 26...♕xd5? 27.♕xc4 ♕xc4 28.♖xc4 White should be clearly better with his two bishops and extra pawn) 27.♖xc1 ♕g5+ 28.♔h3 ♕h5+ and Black escapes with perpetual check;

B2132) 24.♖xc4 dxc4 25.♕c2!∞ (25.d5? ♖e1 26.♕c2 ♕d8 27.♗xc6 ♕g5+ 28.♔h3 ♖g1-+; there is no effective way to stop ♕h6) and despite being an exchange down, White gets sufficient compensation, but nothing more.

B214) 23.♖c2!± is not an easy move to find: 23...♗a5 (23...♕d6?! 24.♗xc6 ♕xc6 25.b3 and White regains the material and keeps a big advantage)

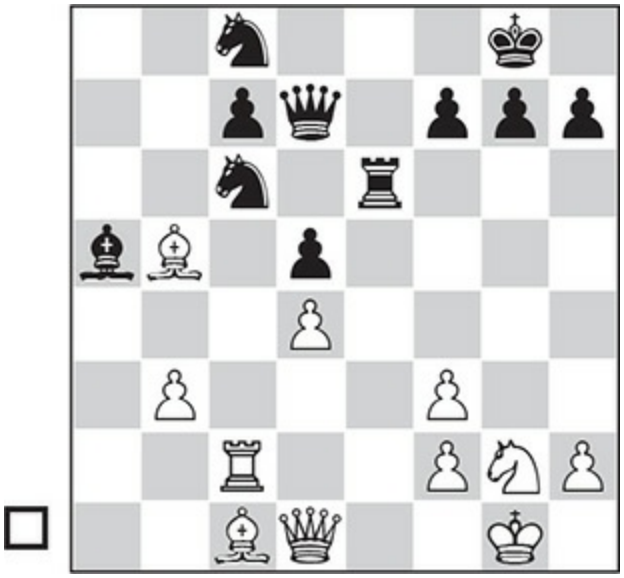


analysis diagram

TASK 3*: Time to think: 5 minutes.*

B2141) With 24.♗e3?!, White hopes to keep the e-file closed and shift his attention to exploiting the pin, but with 24...♖xe3!, Black starts a forced sequence of moves to equalise eventually: 25.fxe3 ♘xe3 26.♗xc6 ♕d6 27.♕a1 ♘xc2 28.♕xa5 ♕xc6 29.♘xd5=;

B2142) 24.♘g2!? prevents 24...♖e1, but allows Black to arrange the third-rank defence of the knight on c6: 24...♖e6 25.b3! (25.♗f4?! ♗b4! 26.b3 ♘4a5⇆, and White is unable to exploit the pin) 25...♘b6 26.♗b5 (White retains the pin) 26...♘c8



analysis diagram

TASK 4: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

27.♖a2!, and suddenly White shifts his attention to the open a-file and the weakened eighth rank: 27...♗b6 28.♖a8 ♖e8 29.♖xc8! ♖xc8 30.♕c2, ending up with two pieces for a rook and a clear advantage;

B2143) 24.♘d3! ♕e6 25.b3 ♘xd4 26.♗xe8 ♘xc2 27.♕xc2, and White retains the extra piece.

B22) 22...♕d6! 23.♗xc6 ♕xc6 24.b3 ♗a5! seems to provide good counterplay for Black, but White comes up with a counterstrike: 25.♘xd5! (25.♖c2? ♖xb3-+) 25...♕xd5 26.bxc4 ♕d6 27.♖b3! ♖d8! (this is the correct file for the rook; 27...♖e8?! 28.♖e3 ♖xe3 29.♗xe3±; 27...♖xb3?! 28.♕xb3 c6 29.♕e3± and White should eventually convert his extra pawn) 28.d5 c6⇆, and Black gets sufficient counterplay.

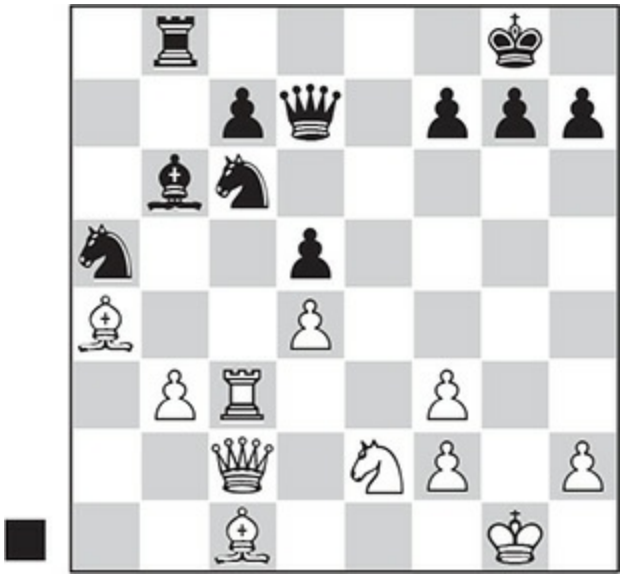
Let's go back to the position after 19...♗xf3! 20.gxf3 ♘d6 21.♖c3 ♘c4.

B3) 22.b3! ♘4a5 and now:

B31) 23.b4?! lets Black escape with a draw by playing more or less forcing moves: 23...♘c4 24.♖xc4 dxc4 25.d5. Black has many ways to equalise here, e.g. 25...♖d8!? 26.♘c3! ♕h3! 27.♗xc6 ♖d6! (another point of 26...♕h3) 28.♗f4 (28.♘e4? ♖g6+ 29.♘g3 ♗xf2+ 30.♔xf2 ♕xh2+-+)

28...♖g6+ 29.♗g3 ♖xg3+ (29...h5? 30.♕f1) 30.hxg3 ♕xg3+ 31.♔h1 ♕h3+ ends in a forced perpetual;

B32) 23.♕c2



analysis diagram

TASK 5: *Find a good continuation for Black. Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

23...♖e8! exploits the overloaded nature of the white queen, which has to both defend the knight on e2 and attack the knight on c6. Choosing the correct file for the rook, e8 or d8, will be a critical decision in many similar situations. White has many interesting options to consider here. Let us look at them one by one:

B321) 24.♘f4 ♕d8! (the correct move order; in this particular situation, playing 24...♖e1+?! followed by ...♕g5 does not work: 25.♔g2 ♕d8! (the move order is very important, as it mostly is while calculating in complex situations) 26.♘e2! (Black does not get in his much-desired ...♕g5 anymore) 26...♕e7 27.♗e3±, and White has managed to consolidate) and now:

B3211) 25.♗xc6?? ♖e1+ 26.♔g2 ♕g5+ 27.♔h3 ♖g1, threatening 28...♕h6 check, which cannot be prevented;

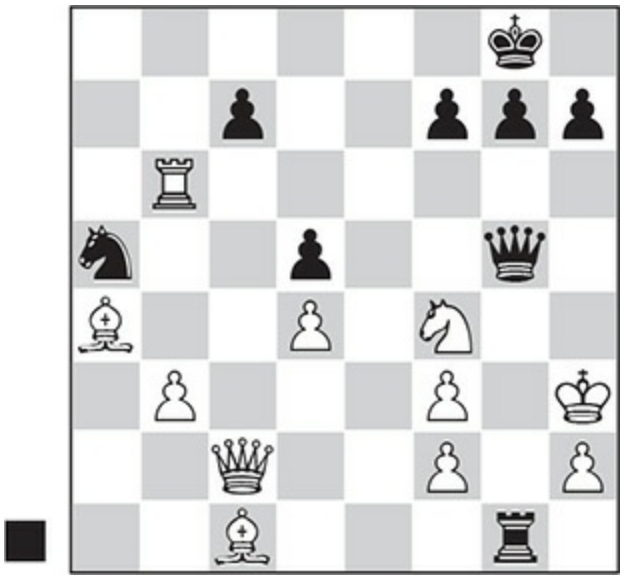
B3212) 25.♘e2 ♕f6!?⇋ (25...♘b4?! 26.♕d2);

B3213) A highly interesting position arises after 25.♖xc6?!: 25...♖e1+

(we should pay close attention to playing ...♕g5 or ...♖e1 first; 25...♘xc6?! 26.♕xc6 ♖e1+ 27.♔g2 ♕g5+ 28.♔h3 ♕f5+ is only good enough for a draw) 26.♔g2 ♕g5+! (26...♘xc6? 27.♕xc6 ♕g5+ 28.♔h3 ♕f5+=) 27.♔h3 ♖g1! (27...♘xc6? 28.♕xc6 ♕f5+; 28...g6?, threatening 29...♕h6 check, does not work due to 29.♕a8+ ♔g7 30.♘e6+!+-). As such, Black is not threatening anything in this position, but this sets up a mating attack in the near future. The position looks completely lost for White, but he has an interesting resource that will force Black to be creative and accurate to win:

B32131) 28.♖e6!? fxe6 29.♗e8 ♕h6+ 30.♗h5 g5 wins for Black without any special effort;

B32132) 28.♖xb6!?. White tries his last trick to confuse Black and create counter-chances. Black should keep his cool here.



analysis diagram

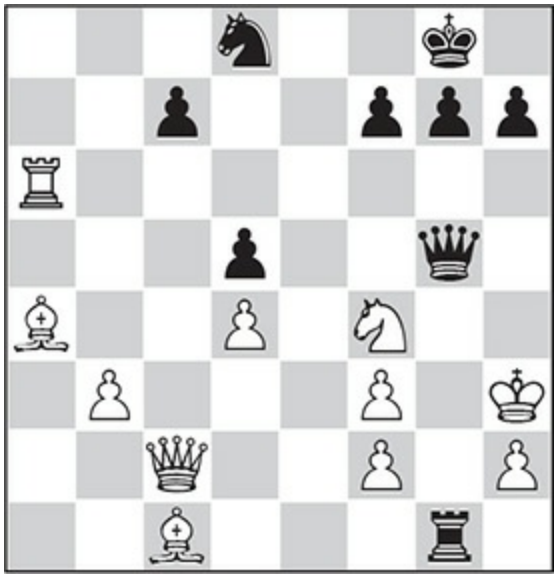
Please remember, many players are trying to visualise this position from the initial position!

TASK 6: *Find the winning continuation for Black and calculate it to the end. Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

B321321) 28...f6? 29.♖b8+ ♔f7 30.♕xc7#;

B321322) 28...g6? simply loses to 29.♖b8+ ♔g7 30.♘e6+, but a player has to see all kinds of attempts while analysing. We shouldn't have the expectation that we will analyse one or two variations and they will be correct. It does not work that way. We try multiple interesting continuations, many of them will not work, and only one or sometimes two will work. That does not mean the variations we saw and that turned out to be incorrect are of no use. Our mind should keep moving from one variation to another all the time. Suddenly we will see some idea that will work in our favour. This requires some level of persistence. The idea we see, the analysis we make, even though it may not work in that particular position, will give us a good understanding about the position and its nuances. Some of the concepts or ideas we saw and rejected in a particular position can be used somewhere else to our advantage. More importantly, this whole process of seeing and analysing different moves and ideas enriches our analytical ability. This is more valuable in my opinion than the output of our analysis;

B321323) 28...♘b7? 29.♖a6 ♘d8!?. (29...g6?, clearing the back rank and setting up 30...♕h6 mate, is easily refuted by 30.♖a8+ ♘d8 31.♖xd8+! ♕xd8 – the black queen is lured away from the attack – 32.♕c6+-).

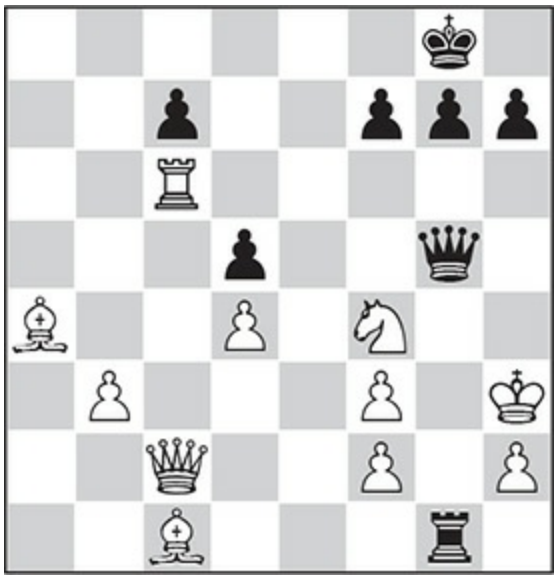


analysis diagram

Try to slow down here and find the only resource for White.

30.♗d7! is an amazing move. Modern chess is all about using every resource in the position to our advantage. Every minute detail is important. 30...g6 31.♗g4 (White is just in time to prevent 31...♕h6 checkmate. As we can see, when we have a material advantage, we should always be ready to give back some of it or at times all of it to guard our king against the attack. We should not be greedy at such moments and try to cling on to the extra material) 31...♕h6+ (31...h5 32.♗d7+-) 32.♘h5 ♖xc1 33.♕e2+–. White has successfully parried all of Black's threats and has threats of his own against the black king;

B321324) 28...♘c6!! is an amazing resource! 29.♖xc6 (29.♕xc6 allows 29...♕f5+, the drawback of White's queen moving away from the b1-h7 diagonal: 30.♔h4 g5+ 31.♔h5 gxf4+ 32.♔h4 ♕g5+ 33.♔h3 ♕h5#).



analysis diagram

Now comes another amazing move from Black: 29...g6!, and there is no way for White to prevent the checkmate that is about to follow. 29...f6? allows the beautiful 30.♖xf6! ♕xf6 (30...gxf6? 31.♗e8! and the bishop/knight combination will save the white king from the mating attack just in time) 31.♗e8 g5! (an important resource; 31...♕h6+? 32.♗h5+-) 32.♗h5! (32.♘h5 leads to mate after 32...♕e6+ but 32...♕xf3+? 33.♘g3 will badly backfire for Black) 32...gxf4 33.♕xc7 ♕e6+ 34.♔h4 ♕f6+, with a beautiful

draw finally!

B3214) 25.♗e3. Such positions can be very confusing when trying to visualise from afar. But that is precisely why I am giving such variations. We should expose ourselves to varying degrees of complex situations in our home preparation and build up our capabilities by analysing them deeply. This can be put to good use in practical tournament games. During the games, we will see that our mind is reasonably calm and efficient in analysing variations, due to our constant exposure at home precisely for such eventualities:

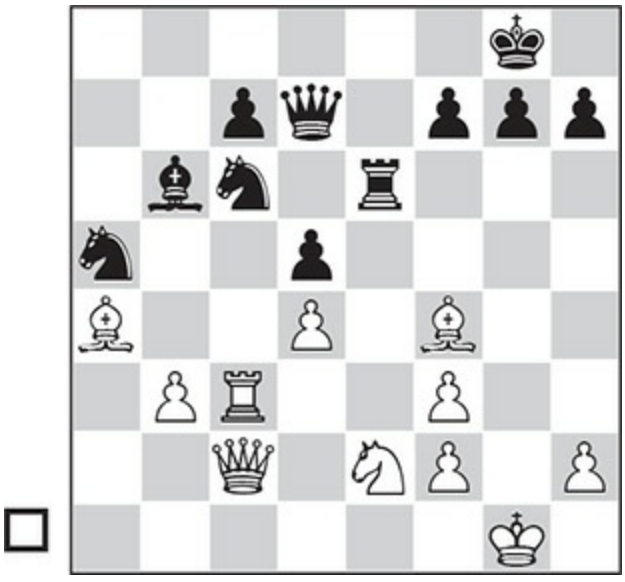
B32141) 25...♗xd4!? 26.♗xc6! ♘xc6 27.♖xc6 ♖xe3! (a beautiful and timely counter-strike) 28.fxe3 ♗xe3+ 29.♔h1 ♗xf4 30.♕f5 ♗d6 31.♕xd5 g6 and Black has a safer king and reasonable compensation for the exchange deficit;

B32142) 25...♘xd4!? 26.♕d1 ♖e5!? 27.♗xd4 ♗xd4 28.♕xd4 ♖e1+ 29.♔g2 ♕g5+ 30.♔h3 ♕h6+ is a typical drawing mechanism we have seen many times in this game – pattern recognition in action!

B322) 24.♗xc6?! ♘xc6 25.♖xc6 ♖xe2! (here we can see the point of Black's 23...♖e8!) 26.♕xe2 (26.♖xb6? ♖e1+!-+) 26...♕xc6;

B323) 24.♗e3 ♖e6=;

B324) 24.♗f4 ♖e6!?



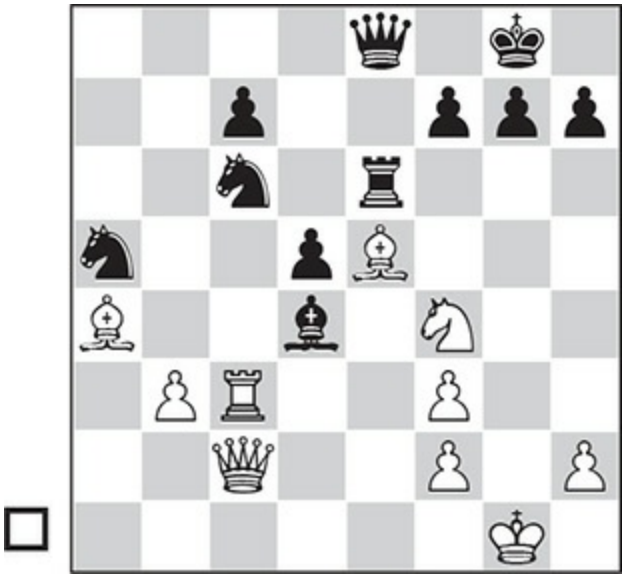
analysis diagram

TASK 7: *Find a good continuation for White with supporting analysis. Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

25.♗e5! is not an easy move at all from a human perspective. Does it have training value to try to find such computer-assisted moves? This, I agree, is a very relevant question.
Over the years, I have used positions with deep computer-assisted analysis with my students and I have seen that they learn to find such resources, given sufficient time and encouragement. I strongly believe that the limits we set to human capabilities should be quite flexible to permit a few among us to go beyond what sounds reasonable at a certain time and get punished for such efforts. The persistent ones may make it work at some point! Who knows? Then it could become the new normal until someone tries to think otherwise. Life goes on...

B3241) 25...♕e8?! 26.♘f4 (one of the points of 24.♗f4) and now:

B32411) 26...♗xd4



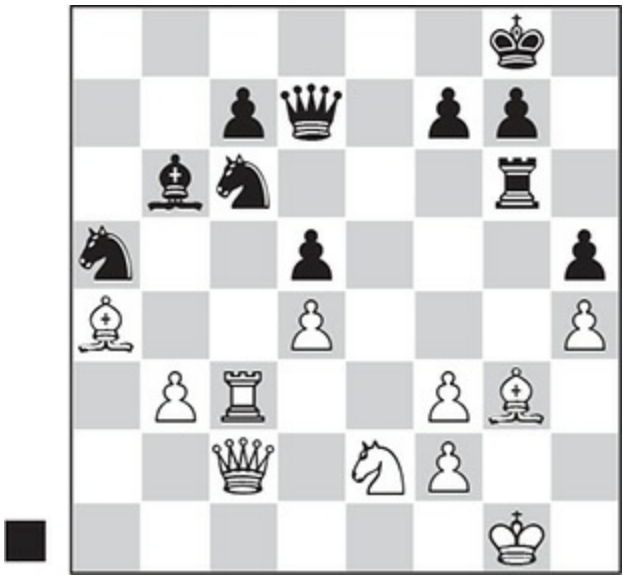
analysis diagram

TASK 8: *Try to refute 26...♗xd4. Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

27.♗xd4 ♖e1+ 28.♔g2 ♘xd4 29.♗xe8 ♘xc2 30.♗a4! (the first key move in this variation, but the fun does not end here!) 30...♘d4 (30...g5?! 31.♖xc2 gxf4 32.♖xc7±; the ♘a5 feels like, what am I doing here?) 31.♖c5! (second critical move) 31...♘axb3 32.♗xb3 ♘xb3 33.♖b5! (the third critical move in the variation) 33...g5 34.♘h5 f5 35.♖xb3 ♔f7 36.♖e3! (fourth!) 36...♖d1 (if 36...♖xe3 37.fxe3 ♔g6 38.♘g3 c5 39.♔f2 White should be winning in this position) 37.♖c3! (fifth!) 37...f4 38.♖c6!; the final critical move; accuracy until the end!;

B32412) 26...♖xe5!? 27.dxe5 ♕xe5 28.♗xc6 ♕xf4 29.♖d3! ♗xf2+ (29...d4 30.♗e4±) 30.♔f1! g6 31.♗xd5 ♗b6 32.♕d2±.

B3242) 25...♖g6+ 26.♗g3 h5! (giving breathing space for Black's king with gain of tempo) 27.h4 (27.♘f4 ♖h6 28.h4 ♗xd4∞)



analysis diagram

TASK 9: *Find a good continuation for Black. Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

27...♕d6! 28.♔h2 (28.♔f1 ♕f6 29.♕d2 ♘xd4 30.♘f4 ♖xg3! 31.fxg3 c6! ∞) 28...♕f6 29.♗xc6 ♘xc6 30.♘f4 ♘xd4 31.♕d3 c5! 32.♘xg6 (32.♘xd5 ♕d8∞) 32...fxg6, with sufficient compensation. The black king will hide on h7, the knight can sit on f5.

Now let’s go back to move 19 again.

C) 19...♖e8? aims to defend the ♘c6 with 20...♖e6. But the drawback is that with 20.♕c2! ♖e6 21.♗xc6 White exploits Black’s weak back rank and wins;

D) 19...♕e6?, trying to get out of the pin without any formalities, simply lets White execute his plan without any hindrance: 20.♗xc6 ♕xc6 (20...♗xf3 21.gxf3 ♕g6+ 22.♔f1 simply loses a piece for Black; we should note that the variations were suggested by students who were seeing the position in their minds from the initial position) 21.♘e5 ♕e6 (21...♗xe2 22.♘xc6 ♗xd1 23.♘xb8 ♗xd4 24.♗e3 ♗xb2 25.♖a8 h6 26.♘c6+ ♔h7 27.♖a7, and White should win this eventually) 22.♘xg4 ♕xg4 23.f3+-. Calculating such straightforward forcing variations should be the first step in the progress for upcoming players.

Now we go back to the game.

20.h3!?

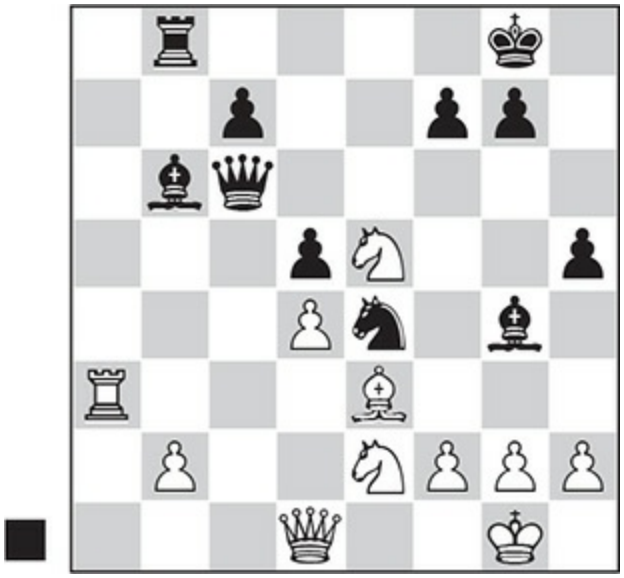
This will help White’s king to go to h2 when Black gives ...♖e1 check, as we saw in the 19...♗g4! lines.

A) After 20.♗e3!? we have:

A1) 20...f6? 21.♕c1+-;

A2) 20...♗xf3? 21.gxf3 ♘d6 22.♖c3 (22.♕c1? ♘c4∞) 22...♘c4 23.b3 ♘4a5 (23...♗a5 24.bxc4+-; 23...♘xe3 24.fxe3+-) 24.♕c1+-;

A3) 20...♕d6! 21.♗xc6 ♕xc6 22.♘e5



analysis diagram

TASK 10: *Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

A31) 22...♗xe2? 23.♘xc6 ♗xd1 24.♘xb8+-;

A32) 22...♕b5? 23.f3 ♕xb2 24.♖b3+-;

A33) 22...♕e6? 23.f3 ♘d6 (23...f6 24.♘xg4+-) 24.fxg4 f6 25.♘f4 ♕e8 26.♘eg6 ♘c4 27.♘xd5!+-;

A34) 22...♕e8! 23.f3! ♘d6 (23...f6 24.♘xg4+-) 24.fxg4 f6 and now:

A341) 25.♘f3?! ♘c4 26.♗f2 ♘xa3 27.bxa3 hxg4;

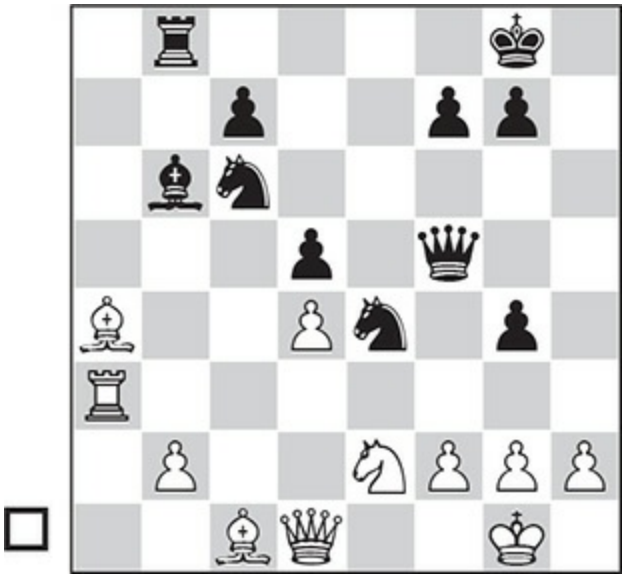
A342) 25.♕b3 fxe5 26.♕xd5+ ♕f7 27.♕xe5 (27.♕xf7+ ♔xf7∞) 27...♖f8∓;

A343) Now, 25.♘f4! does not come with tempo as in the line with 22...♕e6 above: 25...fxe5 26.dxe5 (26.♘xd5? ♗xd4∓) 26...♕xe5 27.♗xb6 cxb6 (27...♖xb6? loses very instructively: 28.♖a8+! ♔h7 29.♖h8+!+- or 28...♘e8 29.♕xd5+ ♕xd5 30.♘xd5 ♖e6 31.♘xc7+-; or 28...♔f7 29.♖f8+!+-) 28.♕xd5+ ♕xd5 29.♘xd5 hxg4. This endgame looks completely equal after all the complications. But as can be seen from the

following analysis, White's position retains some venom and Black has to be accurate to survive: 30.♖g3 ♘f5 31.♖xg4 ♖d8 32.♘f6+ ♔f7 33.♘e4 ♖d1+ 34.♔f2 ♖b1 35.♘g5+ ♔f6 36.♘h7+ ♔e5 (36...♔f7 37.♖b4±) 37.♖b4 ♖c1!±.

Back to move 20.

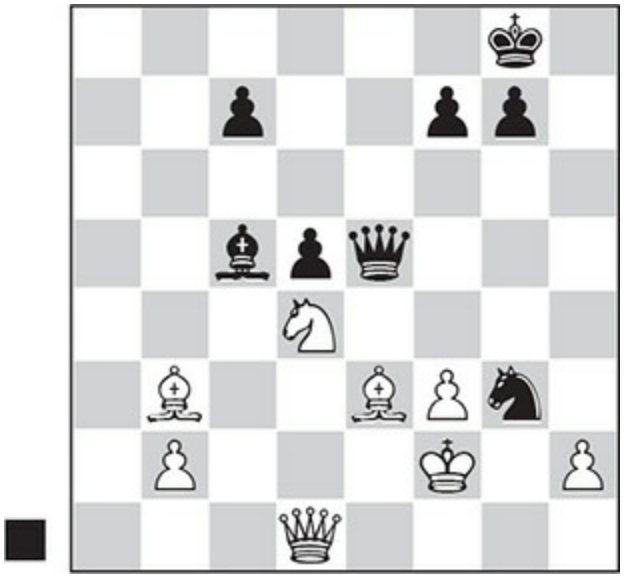
B) 20.♘e5! is a very forcing attempt by White to fight for an advantage: 20...♕f5! (20...♗xe2? 21.♘xd7 ♗xd1 22.♘xb8 ♗xa4 23.♖xa4 ♘xb8 24.♖a8 ♗xd4 25.♖xb8+ ♔h7 26.♗e3+-) 21.♘xg4 hxg4



analysis diagram

TASK 11: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

22.f3! (22.♗xc6? ♕xf2+ 23.♔h1 ♕f6!-+) 22...gxf3 23.gxf3 (23.♖xf3? ♕e6∓) 23...♘xd4! (23...♘g5?! 24.♘g3 ♗xd4+ 25.♔h1 ♕g6 26.♗xg5 ♕xg5 27.♗xc6 ♖xb2 28.♕xd4 ♕c1+ 29.♕g1 ♕xc6 30.♘f5 ♕f6 31.♖a8+ ♔h7 32.♕g4 ♖b1+ 33.♔g2 ♖b2+ 34.♔h3±) 24.♘xd4 ♗c5! (an amazing type of move, not possible to find by a human) 25.♖b3 ♖xb3 26.♗xb3 ♕e5 27.♗e3 ♘g3!? (27...♘c3!? 28.bxc3 ♕xe3+ 29.♔g2 g6!± (29...♕xc3? 30.♘e2+-) and Black has very good compensation for the piece; it's hard to believe, but there it is) 28.♔f2!



analysis diagram

TASK 12: *Find a good continuation for Black. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

B1) 28...♘f5? 29.♘xf5 ♕xh2+ 30.♔e1+-;

B2) 28...♘h5?! 29.♕d3 ♕xh2+ 30.♔e1±;

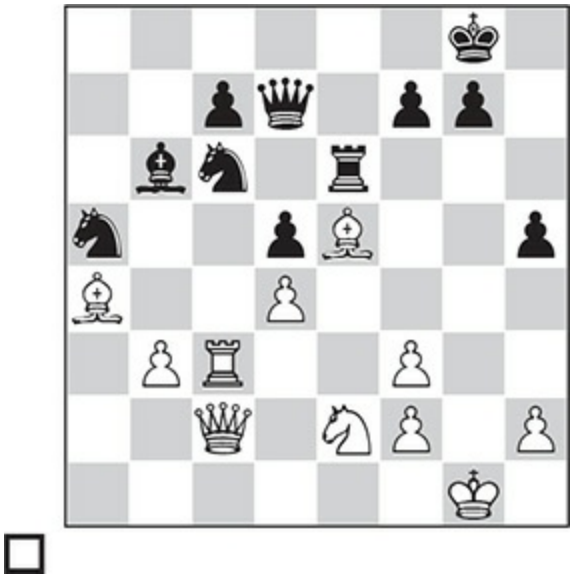
B3) 28...♘h1+!? 29.♔e2! ♕xh2+ 30.♔d3 ♕xb2 31.♕c2! ♕xc2+ 32.♔xc2 ♘g3 33.♔d3±. The d5-pawn will mostly be lost soon, and finally it could be two bishops versus a knight, and White should win that!;

B4) 28...♘f1! 29.♕xf1 ♗xd4 30.♕d3 ♕xh2+ 31.♔e1 ♗xe3 32.♕xe3 ♕xb2 33.♗xd5± and Black retains drawing chances but it won't be easy at all.

C) 20.♗xc6?! ♕xc6 21.♘e5 ♕e6 22.♗e3∞ (22.f3?? ♕xe5-+);

D) 20.♕c2?! ♘b4 21.♕b3 ♕e7∓;

E) 20.♗f4! is the most powerful continuation for White, which I completely underestimated in my analysis: 20...♗xf3 (20...♕e8? 21.♗xc6 ♕xc6 22.♘e5 ♕e8 23.f3±) 21.gxf3 ♘d6 22.♖c3 ♘c4 23.b3 ♘4a5 24.♕c2 ♖e8 25.♗e5! (we have seen this idea earlier) 25...♖e6



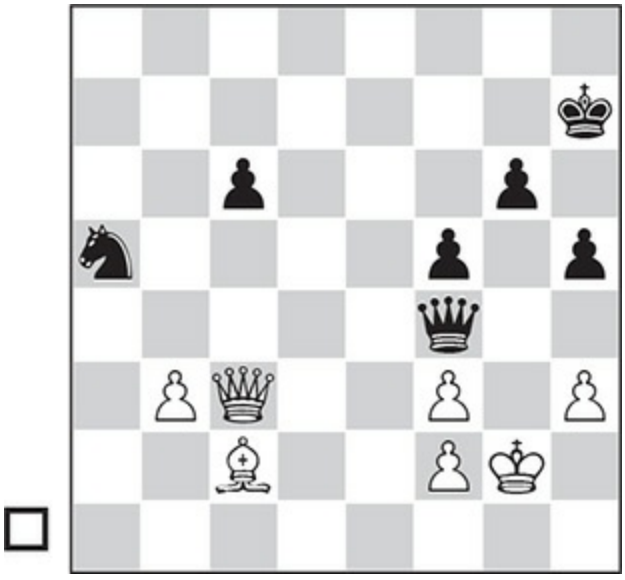
analysis diagram

TASK 13: *Find a powerful continuation for White. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

26.f4! ♖g6+ 27.♔f1 ♕c8 28.♖f3!±. White threatens to play 29.f5 and occupy the g-file with his rook. Black's pieces are stuck on the queenside.
20...♗xf3 21.gxf3 ♘d6 22.♖c3 ♘c4 23.b3 ♘4a5 24.♕c2

Until this point, more or less both sides' moves were forced.
24...♕xh3?

24...♖e8 is practically the best chance for Black: 25.♘f4! (25.♗e3?! ♖e6∞) 25...♖e1+ (25...♕d8? 26.♗xc6 ♖e1+ 27.♔h2+-, the point of playing 20.h3) 26.♔h2 (26.♔g2 ♕d8!) 26...♕d6 (26...♗xd4 27.♗xc6 ♘xc6 (27...♕d6 28.♗xd5!+-) 28.♖xc6 ♗e5 29.♖a6 ♕c8 30.♖a5!±) 27.♗xc6 ♖xc1 (27...♗xd4?! 28.♗xd5! ♖xc1 gives White the extra possibility of 29.♕f5!+-) 28.♕xc1 ♗xd4 29.♗xd5! (an important resource for White; 29.♖c2? ♘xb3∓) 29...♗xc3 30.♕xc3 ♕xf4+ 31.♔h1! c6. Though the position is equal materially, White's bishop is much superior to Black's knight, which gives a clear advantage to White as can be seen in the following variation: 32.♗e4! f5 33.♗c2! (33.♗b1? c5!⇆; 33.♗xc6 ♘xc6 34.♕xc6 ♔h7! 35.♕c3! and White should probably win this ending, but it will require good technique) 33...♔h7 (33...♕c1+ 34.♔g2 ♕g5+ 35.♔f1 ♕c1+ 36.♔e2+-) 34.♔g2! (White is in no hurry to force things as there is no good way for Black to bring his knight into the game. Why not make use of the time available to improve our position to the maximum before we force things?) 34...g6



analysis diagram

TASK 14: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

35.h4! prevents the checks by the queen (35.♕xa5? ♕g5+=): 35...♕c7 36.b4

♘b7 37.♗a4 c5 (37...♘d8 38.♕f6 with complete domination) 38.♕c4 ♕e7 39.b5+-.

25.♗xc6 ♘xc6 26.♖xc6!

26.♘f4! ♘xd4 27.♘xh3 ♘xc2 28.♖xc2+- is probably the safest in hindsight.

26...♖e8

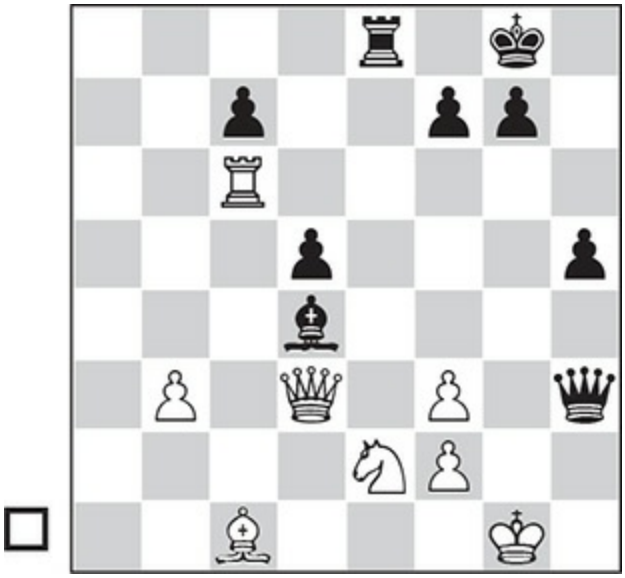
26...♕xf3 27.♖c3.

27.♕d3!

Stabilising the position; 27.♗e3 ♕xf3∓.

27...♗xd4!?

27...♖e4!? is another attempt to complicate: 28.♗f4! h4 29.b4! ♔h8! 30.b5 ♔g8! 31.♖c2 ♖e6 32.♗xc7 ♖g6+ 33.♗g3 hxg3 34.♘xg3±.



TASK 15: *Time to think: 3 minutes.*

28.♗f4!

28.♖xc7 ♗e5; 28.♕xd4 ♖xe2 29.♗d2 ♖e4 30.fxe4 (30.♕xd5 ♖h4) 30...♕g4+=.

28...♗e5 29.♗xe5

29.♖c1+-.

29...♖xe5 30.♖a6!.

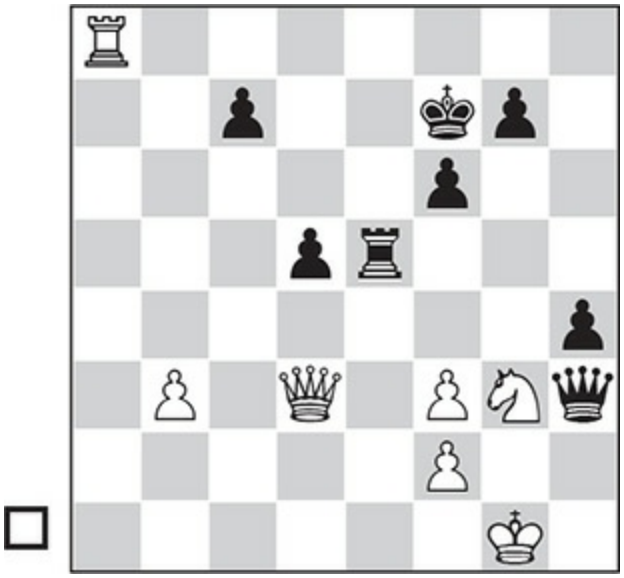
An important resource for White;

30.♘g3 h4 31.♖a6! (31.♕f1?? ♕d7!-+).

30...f6! 31.♘g3

31.b4! is very similar to what we will see in the game: 31...c6 (31...♖g5+ 32.♘g3 h4 33.♖a8+ ♔f7 34.♖h8 c6 35.b5+-) 32.♖a8+ ♔f7 33.♖h8 h4 34.♘g3 ♖e8 will transpose to what we will see in the following analysis.

31...h4 32.♖a8+ ♔f7



TASK 16: *Find a study-like win for White. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

33.♕f1??

Throwing away all the effort with a single blunder. A common complaint from losers!

33.♖h8! c6 34.b4 ♖e8!? 35.♖h5 (35.♖xe8?? hxg3-+) 35...♖e5! 36.♖h7 ♔g8 37.♖h5 ♔f7 38.♖h8 ♖e8 39.♖h7 ♔g8 40.♖h5 ♔f7 41.b5+-. I am not explaining the rook dance deeply. Please spend some time to understand the need for it! Very interesting stuff!

33...♕e6

Suddenly, Black is winning.

34.♖a6 ♕e7 35.♘e4 dxe4 36.♕c4+ ♔g6 37.f4 ♖c5 38.♕e2 ♕d7 39.♕xe4+ ♕f5 40.♕xf5+?! ♔xf5 41.♖a4 ♖c3 42.♔g2 g6 43.♖b4 h3+ 44.♔g1 ♔g4 45.♖e4 ♖c1+ 46.♔h2 ♖c2 47.♔g1 h2+ 48.♔xh2 ♖xf2+ 0-1

Although I was disappointed, I felt very happy to have been a willing

participant in playing an interesting and creative game of chess. What more does a chess player truly want?

What steps does a chess player's mind go through during the analytical process?

The best-case scenario in the thinking process could be something like this:

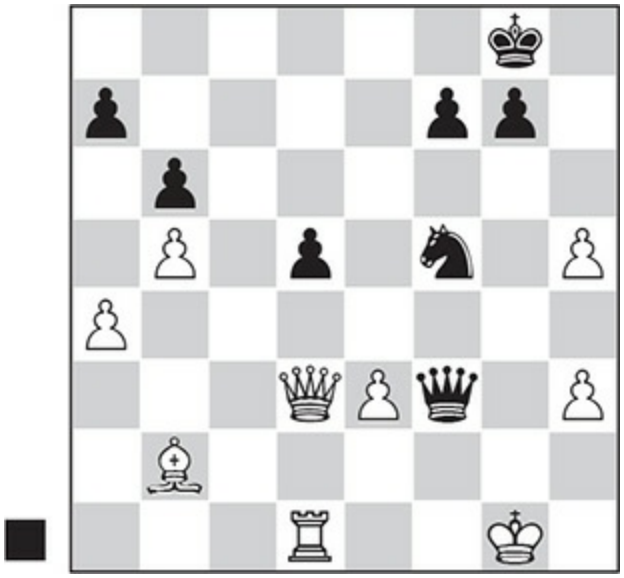
1. Look at the position with the right concentration and objectivity.
2. Pay adequate attention to the opponent's previous move with all its pros and cons, and draw relevant lessons from it.
3. Identify all the available decent moves or the most relevant ones in the position that need our attention for further analysis.
4. Analyse them using the many tools available like calculation, prophylaxis, piece improvement, correct exchanges, using familiar patterns from the memory bank, relying on experience, applying logic and common sense, applying appropriate chess principles, etc.
5. Stop the analysis at the right moment.
6. Evaluate/assess the resulting positions correctly and choose the best continuation among the available possibilities.
7. Take a decision and play it.
8. Do all of the above with an efficient use of time, energy, and effort.

Let us try to apply this in our thought process and solve the following two positions, and try to find out if we can do it efficiently or not.

Game 40 Level 1

Levon Aronian	2763
Veselin Topalov	2767

Sofia 2008 (1)



TASK 1: *Find the forced win for Black. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

39...♘xe3!

39...♘h4? can be easily refuted by 40.♕xd5 (40.♕f1+-) 40...♕xe3+ 41.♔h2+-.

40.♖d2

40.♕d2 ♕g3+! 41.♔h1 ♕xh3+ 42.♔g1 ♕g4+-+.

40...♕g3+! 41.♔h1 ♕xh3+

First collect the pawn on h3 before going for the main winning idea.

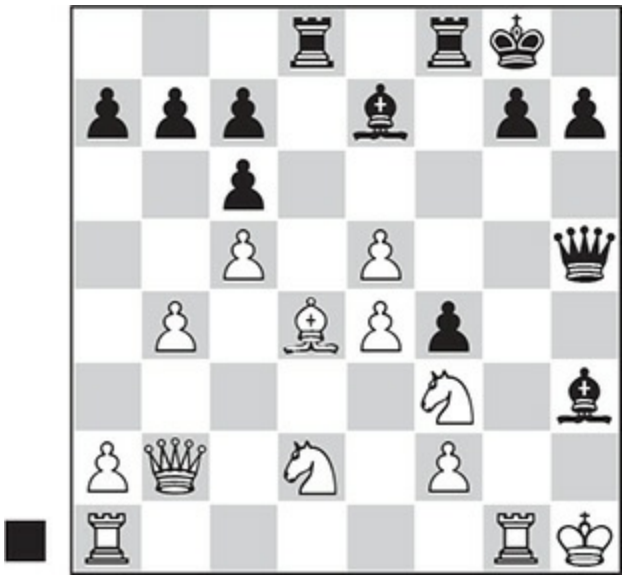
42.♔g1

42.♖h2 ♕f3+ 43.♔g1 ♕g3+ 44.♔h1 ♕e1+-+.

42...♕g3+ 43.♔h1 ♕e1+ 44.♔h2

44...♕xd2+! 45.♕xd2 ♘f1+ 46.♔g2 ♘xd2-+ 0-1

Game 41 Level 2
Dimitri Reinderman
Ivan Sokolov
Netherlands tt 2001



TASK 1: *Find a forced win for Black. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

1...♖xd4!

1...♗g4+?? 2.♘h2+-.

2.♕xd4 ♖d8! 3.♕b2

3.♕c3 ♖xd2! (3...♖d3! is more creative!) 4.♕xd2 will transpose to the main line (4.♘xd2 ♗f1+-+).

3...♖xd2! 4.♕xd2 ♕xf3+ 5.♔h2 ♕h5!-+ 6.♖g2 ♗xg2+ 7.♔xg2 f3+ 8.♔g3 ♗h4+

With mate soon to follow.

The starting position could have arisen from the analysis of this game.

It is seen many times that a player spends lots of time looking at the board, apparently thinking about the position, but the outcome is not as desired. Some players get distracted, bored, overly-excited, despairing, scared, etc. This affects their concentration and the resulting quality of their analysis. **A chess player needs to possess certain qualities to sustain an optimum level of attention and bring out his best qualities during the game.**

What are those qualities?

1. The ability to handle distracting thoughts and emotions during the game.

2. The emotional stability in not allowing our past negative experiences (loss in the previous round, current bad form, drop in rating, etc.) or future expectations (possible gain of rating, norm requirements, final placing in the tournament, prize money, etc.) to interfere with our present objectivity. **We can be mildly influenced but not heavily interrupted.**

3. To keep our reactions to emotions and events on the board in balance.

Suppose a player manages to learn the process of efficient analysis. In that case, all that remains is acquiring more knowledge in critical areas of the game, sharpening his analytical ability, and learning multiple openings in-depth, building breadth and depth in his chess arsenal as a firm foundation.

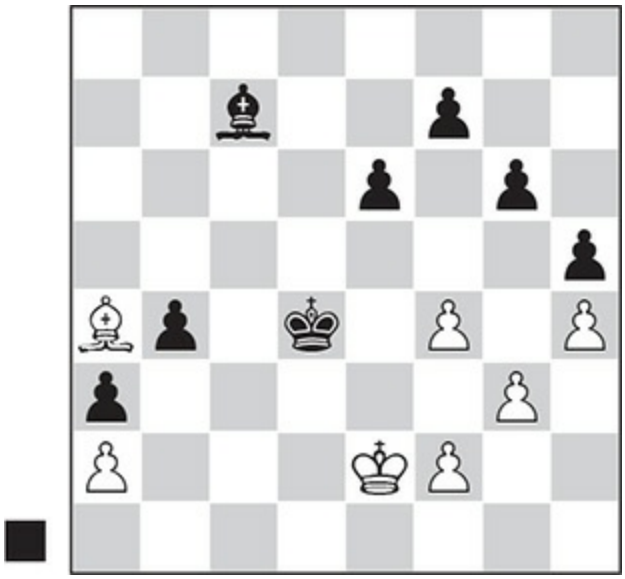
In other words, the priority is to create an ‘assembly line’ to manufacture a product. Once that is done, all that remains is to manufacture the product. Make necessary modifications as per changes in technology and future requirements, but the primary assembly line is in place.

Game 42 Level 5

Tornike Sanikidze 2585

Abhijeet Gupta 2637

Istanbul ol 2012



TASK 1: *Time to think: 10 minutes. How can Black continue the game?*

74...♗xf4!?

This was a must-win game for India as we were trailing by a point against Georgia. After some initial hesitation, Abhijeet went for this sacrifice, which is practically the only way to play for a win in this opposite-coloured bishops ending. The position is objectively equal, especially if you have the luxury of being able to analyse the position with powerful computer engines. Many times, a player has to take decisions, the consequences of which one cannot be sure about. I have seen quite a few players (more than 10) who avoid taking risks at every opportunity, settle for less and are still happy about it. I know many young players and their parents who feel extremely proud of making draws against higher-rated players consistently. The player increases his rating after every such draw, and at the outset, it looks like everything is going in the right direction. But if we look deeply at such draws, the player would have got a good advantage in most cases and would have been the person to offer the draw in the first place. Over a period of time, the player

develops a deep inferiority complex or a lack of self-confidence and becomes what chess players call a ‘draw master’. The player, after increasing his rating steadily in the initial phase of his career, begins to stagnate and rarely scores wins against higher-rated players anymore. Why does this happen?
When a player is young, he should primarily focus on improving his practical skills as a player, accumulate knowledge, make mistakes and learn from them, correct his way of thinking constantly as per requirements, and become a stronger player. Instead, many young players (with abundant encouragement from parents and coaches) focus on increasing their rating quickly without upgrading their playing strength. When we offer a draw from a better position to a higher-rated opponent, it also means that we are not sure about our ability to defeat a higher-rated player even from a better position. We start giving too much respect to an opponent if he is higher rated and, over a period of time, start fearing him. When we cannot play against a higher-rated opponent from a better position, we obviously will not be comfortable playing him in equal or slightly worse positions.

75.gxf4 ♕e4 76.♕d2

76.f3+?? ♕xf4 77.♕f2 f6 78.♕g2 e5-+.

76...♕xf4 77.♕c2

77.♗d1? g5! 78.hxg5 h4-+, as the bishop cannot handle the advanced passed pawns on both flanks.

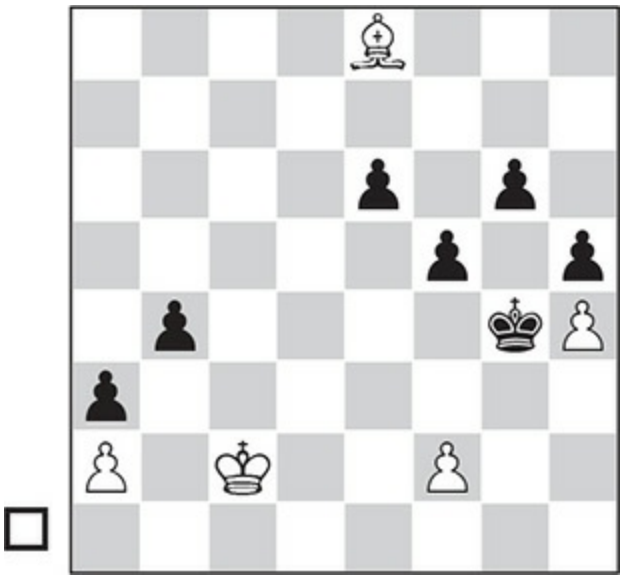
The position is equal and Black has many ways to equalise, but he wants to play for a win. In such situations, we should identify continuations where our opponent will be forced to solve tough practical problems continuously, thereby increasing the chances of him making mistakes.

77...f5

A) 77...g5!? 78.hxg5 h4 79.♕b3 ♔xg5 (79...h3? is careless: 80.♗c6 e5 81.♗h1!+-, just in time before Black closes the gate for White's bishop) 80.♔xb4 e5 (after 80...h3?? 81.♗c6, White would capture the a-pawn, place his bishop on h1 and nurse his passed a-pawn to queen) 81.♗c6 (81.♕xa3?? e4-+; Black permanently shuts the white bishop's route to stop the passed h-pawn) 81...f5 82.♗g2! e4 83.♕xa3 ♔g4 84.♕b4 f4! (this is a highly instructive method for Black to defend the position; we will see this idea being repeated a few times in our analysis) 85.♗xe4 f3 (85...h3? 86.♗h1+-) 86.♗c6 h3 87.♗d7+ ♔h4 88.♗c6 ♔g4=;

B) 77...♔g4 and now:

B1) Even though 78.♗e8?! does not spoil the balance, White has to play accurately from here to keep the balance. 78...f5



analysis diagram

TASK 2: *Time to think: 3 minutes.*

79.♗f7! (79.♗xg6? ♕xh4 80.♗f7 e5-+; as we saw earlier, White is indeed too slow to stop the h-passer) 79...♕xh4 80.♗xe6 ♕g4 81.♕b3 h4 and now:

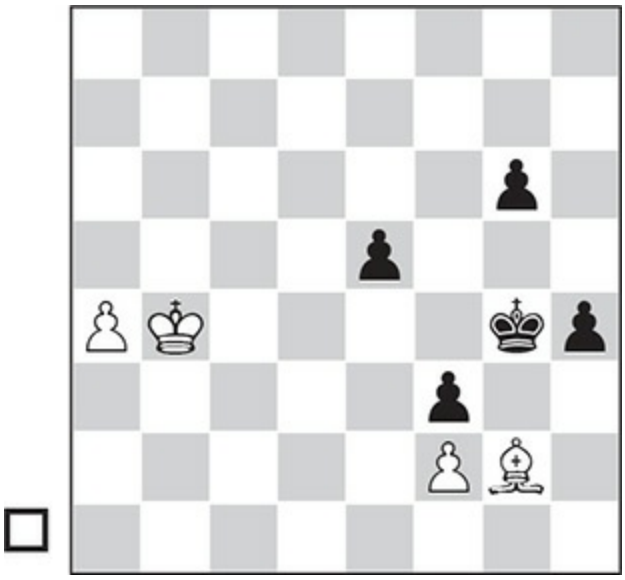
B11) 82.♗d5? is premature: 82...f4 83.♗h1 (to reach the corner to stop the h-pawn before Black shuts the diagonal by playing f2-f3; 83.♕xb4 f3 84.♕xa3 g5 85.♕b4 ♕f4-+, followed by advancing his g-pawn) 83...g5 84.♕xb4 f3 85.♕xa3 ♕f4 86.♕b4 g4 87.a4 g3, and Black is much faster;

B12) Keeping the pin on the f5-pawn for one move is important, not letting it advance to f3 and block the h1-a8 diagonal: 82.♕xb4 ♕f3 83.♕xa3 h3 84.♕b4 h2 85.♗d5+ ♕xf2 86.a4 f4 87.♗h1! ♕g1 88.♗c6 ♕f2=. Most of the moves were more or less forced. A nice draw in the end.

B2) 78.♕b3 ♕xh4 79.♕xb4 f5 80.♗c6.

It is incredibly important to stop a very fine tempi gainer of White's at the very next move. In order to understand this, let us study the following line:

B21) 80...e5?? 81.♗g2! (White brings his bishop within striking distance of the kingside, to take away squares from the opponent's king and also delay Black from pushing his passed pawn. Every tempo gained is vital in the resulting pawn race) 81...♕g4. Black aims to advance the f- and h-pawns quickly, giving White the critical choice of where to move his bishop, which will determine the further course of the game: 82.♕xa3 f4 83.♕b4 h4 84.a4 f3



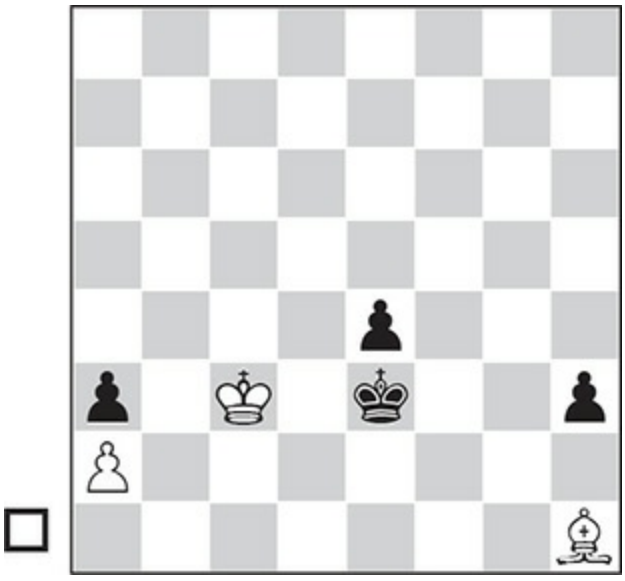
analysis diagram

TASK 3: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes. Which is the correct square for the bishop?*

85.♗h1! (if 85.♗f1? e4 (85...h3 86.♗xh3+ ♕xh3 87.a5 e4! 88.a6 e3=) 86.a5 e3! 87.fxe3 h3 88.♗xh3+ ♕xh3 89.a6 f2 Black escapes with a draw) 85...e4 86.a5 e3 87.♗xf3+! (this is the critical point) 87...♕xf3 88.fxe3+-. Even though Black queens first, White's a-pawn promotes with a check and picks up his counterpart on the long diagonal!;

B22) 80...♕h3!= 81.♕xa3. We are able to get a good picture these days of positions that were almost impossible to analyse without mistakes, thanks to the engines: 81...e5 82.♕b4 e4 83.a4 h4 84.a5 ♕g2 85.a6 h3 86.a7 h2=.

C) 77...♕f3? 78.♗e8! ♕xf2 79.♗xf7 ♕g3 80.♗xg6 ♕xh4 (Black spent too much time on winning the f2- and h4-pawns) 81.♕b3 (81.♗e4 ♕g3 82.♕b3 h4 83.♕xb4 ♕f4 84.♗h1! e5 85.♕c4! e4 86.♕d4 e3 87.♕d3 is another way to win) 81...♕g5 82.♗e4 ♕f4 83.♗h1! (as we saw in an earlier variation, h1 is a beautiful square for the white bishop here) 83...e5 84.♕xb4 e4 85.♕c3 ♕e3 86.♕c2 h4 87.♕c3 h3



analysis diagram

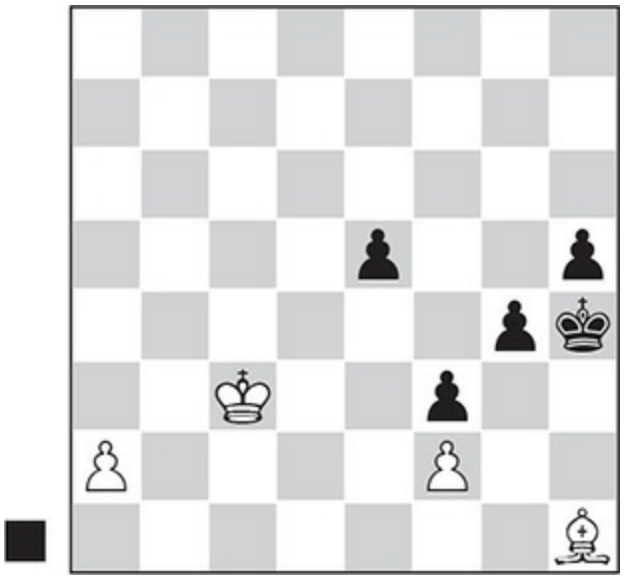
TASK 4: *Time to think: 2 minutes.*

88.♔c4! (88.♔c2? ♔d4! 89.♔d2 h2 90.♗g2 e3+ 91.♔e2 ♔c3 92.♔xe3 ♔b2=) 88...h2 89.♔c3! (Black falls into zugzwang) 89...♔f4 90.♔d4 e3 91.♔d3. White's king danced very well to force Black into zugzwang. Now he will pick up the e- and h-pawns and win the game.

78.♗c6 e5

78...♔g4!? 79.♔b3 ♔xh4 80.♗g2 (80.♔xb4 ♔h3 81.♔xa3 e5 transposes to the line we saw earlier) 80...g5 (80...f4 will transpose to 80....g5) 81.♔xb4 g4 (81...f4 82.♔xa3) 82.♔xa3 f4 (82...♔g5 83.♔b3 h4 84.a4 h3 85.♗h1 f4 86.a5 g3 87.fxg3 fxg3 88.a6=) 83.♔b4 f3 84.♗h1! (84.♗f1?? ♔g5-+, followed by the advance of the h-pawn; 84.♗xf3! is the simplest, e.g. 84...gxf3 85.a4 ♔g5 86.a5 h4 87.a6 h3 88.a7 h2 89.a8♕ h1♕=) 84...e5! (it looks like this is too slow, but it works! 84...g3?? 85.fxg3+ ♔xg3 86.♗xf3, and the a-pawn will promote with check)

A) 85.♔c3??. White is trying to halt the central black pawn from advancing and then advance his a-pawn, but this loses valuable time, especially in a pawn race situation.



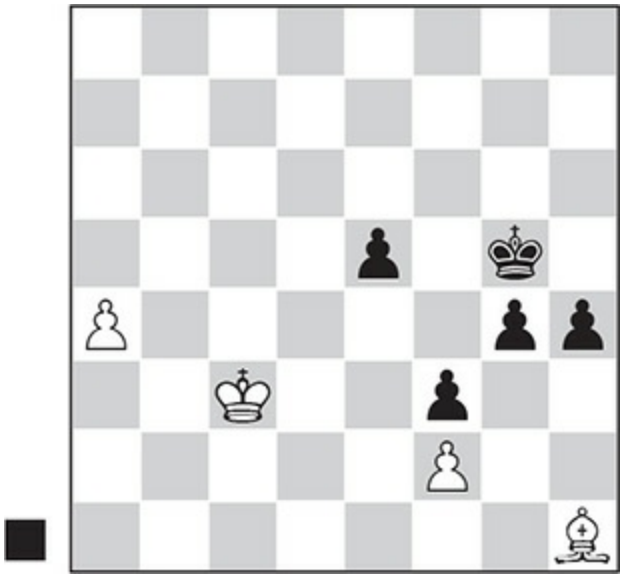
analysis diagram

TASK 5: *Time to think: 3 minutes.*

A1) 85...e4? is too hasty, as White's king can stop the black pawns: 86.♔d4 g3 87.fxg3+ ♔xg3 88.♔e3!=;

A2) 85...g3? 86.fxg3+ ♔xg3 87.♔d2! e4 (87...♔f2?, threatening to advance the central pawn, backfires badly for Black after 88.♔d3+-) 88.♔e3=;

A3) 85...♔g5?? lets the white bishop survive, which will play a damaging role at the right time, as the following lines show: 86.a4 h4



analysis diagram

TASK 6: *Time to think: 3 minutes.*

87.♔d2! (87.a5? e4! 88.a6 e3! 89.fxe3 f2 90.a7 (90.♗g2?? h3-+) 90...f1♕ 91.a8♕, and Black survives) 87...♔f4 88.a5 g3 89.fxg3+ hxg3. It looks like the black pawns are formidable and too advanced, but with accurate play, White emerges on top: 90.♔e1! e4 91.a6 e3. Black's pawns look scary, but... 92.♗xf3! (the key point behind the whole variation) 92...♔xf3 93.a7+-;

A4) 85...♔h3!-+. His majesty marches forward to capture the white bishop that is stuck in the corner like a sitting duck, and then Black advances his g-pawn to promote. Since White's king is within range to stop Black's central pawn, this is the way forward: 86.a4 and now:

A41) The direct advance of the king with 86...♔h2? does not work, due to

87.♗xf3! (it makes sense to lose the bishop in the best possible way, by preventing the dangerous g-pawn from moving forward) 87...gxf3 88.a5 e4 89.♔d4 ♔g2 90.♔e3 h4= as both sides promote at the same time;

A42) 86...e4!, to prevent the sacrifice by the bishop and losing the passed g-pawn in the process: 87.♔d2 (87.♔d4 g3-+; 87...♔h2 also wins) 87...♔h2 (Black cold-bloodedly goes to collect White's imprisoned bishop on h1. For this, he needed to support his f3-pawn with the move 86...e4. After taking the bishop, Black queens faster and wins) 88.a5 ♔xh1 89.a6 g3-+. Black has too many pawns, and bringing his king towards the centre did not really help White.

B) 85.♔c5?? ♔h3-+;

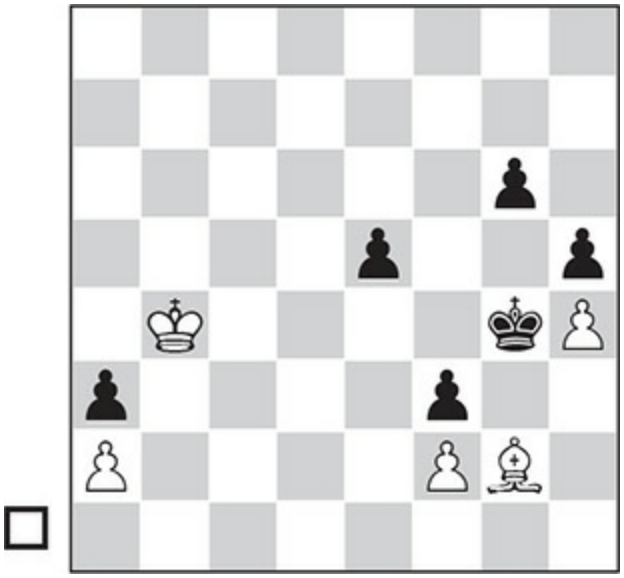
C) 85.a4! e4 86.a5 e3 (86...g3=) 87.fxe3 ♔h3 88.♗xf3! (this is a simple solution to the problem; although the position after 88.a6?! f2 89.a7 f1♕ 90.a8♕ is objectively equal, the danger is more for White as Black's pawn advance can become tricky to handle if White is not careful) 88...gxf3 89.a6 f2 90.a7 f1♕ 91.a8♕=.

79.♗g2 e4

A) 79...♔g4 80.♔b3 f4 (80...♔xh4? 81.♔xb4 f4 82.♔xa3 g5 83.♔b3 g4 84.♗e4 f3 85.a4 ♔g5 86.a5 h4 87.a6 h3 88.a7 h2 89.a8♕ h1♕ 90.♕d8+ ♔f4 91.♗c2 ♕h6 92.♕d2#) and now:

A1) 81.♗e4?? ♔xh4 82.♔xb4 ♔g4 83.♔xa3 h4 84.♔b4 f3 85.♗d5 ♔f4 86.♗e6 e4-+;

A2) 81.♔xb4!? f3



analysis diagram

TASK 7: *Time to think: 3 minutes.*

A21) 82.♗h1 e4 83.♕xa3 e3 84.fxe3 f2 85.♗g2 ♕xh4 86.e4 ♕g3 87.♗f1 h4 88.e5 h3 89.e6 h2 90.e7 h1♕ 91.e8♕ ♕xf1 92.♕xg6+ ♕h2 93.♕d6+ ♕g1-+;

A22) 82.♗f1! ♕xh4 (82...e4 83.♕c3=) 83.♕xa3 and now:

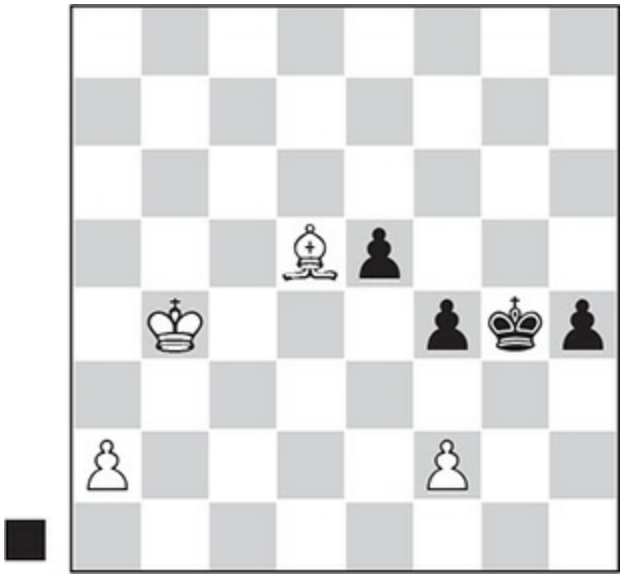
A221) 83...♕g4 84.♕b4 h4 85.a4 h3 86.♗xh3+ ♕xh3 87.a5 e4 88.a6 e3 89.fxe3 f2 90.a7 f1♕ 91.a8♕ ♕e1+ 92.♕c4 ♕xe3∓;

A222) 83...e4 84.♕b4 e3 85.♕c3 (85.fxe3 ♕g3 86.e4 h4 87.e5 h3 88.♗xh3 ♕xh3 89.e6 f2=) 85...e2 86.♗xe2 fxe2 87.♕d2 ♕g4 88.♕xe2 ♕f4 89.a4=;

A223) 83...g5 84.♕b3 g4 85.a4 g3 86.fxg3+ ♕xg3 87.a5 e4 88.a6 e3 89.a7 e2 90.♗xe2=.

A3) 81.♗d5 and now:

A31) 81...g5 82.hxg5 ♕xg5 83.♕xb4 ♕g4 84.♕xa3 h4 85.♕b4



analysis diagram

TASK 8: *Find the only way for Black to hold the position. Time to think: 3 minutes.*

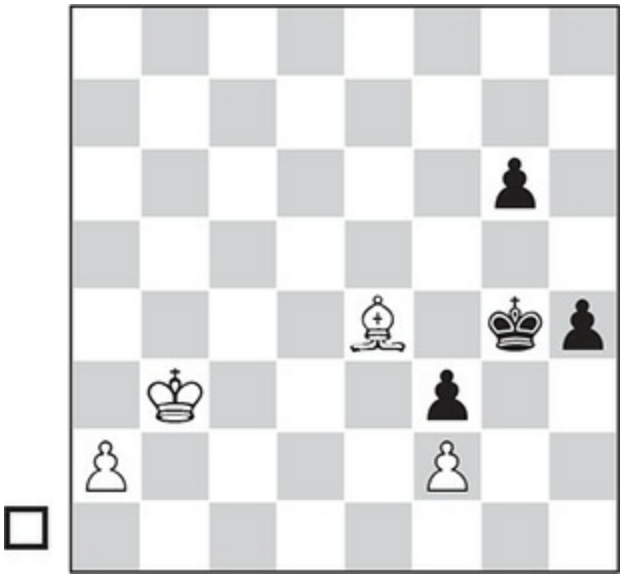
85...e4! 86.♗xe4 f3 87.♗c6 h3 88.♗d7+ ♔h4 89.♗c6=;

A32) 81...♔xh4 82.♔xb4 ♔g4 83.♔xa3 h4 (83...f3 84.♔b2 h4 85.♗e6+ ♔f4 86.a4 e4 87.a5 e3 88.fxe3+ ♔g3! (88...♔xe3? 89.a6 f2 90.♗h3+-) 89.a6 h3 90.a7 h2 91.a8♕ h1♕=) 84.♔b3 and now:

A321) 84...f3 85.♗e6+ ♔f4 86.a4 e4 87.a5 e3 88.fxe3+ ♔g3! 89.a6 h3 (89...f2?? 90.♗c4+– (90.a7 f1♕ 91.a8♕∓)) 90.♗xh3 ♔xh3 91.a7 f2 92.a8♕ f1♕=;

A322) 84...h3 85.♗h1! e4= 86.♔c3 e3 87.fxe3 f3 88.♔d3 ♔g3 89.e4! g5 90.e5 g4 91.e6 ♔h2 92.♗xf3 gxf3 93.♔e3 ♔g2 94.e7=;

A323) 84...e4 85.♗xe4 f3



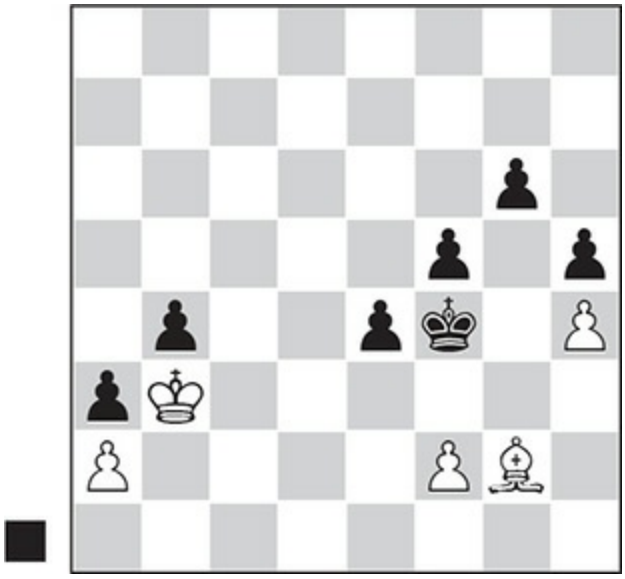
analysis diagram

TASK 9: *Is there a difference between moving the bishop to c6 or b7? Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

86.♗b7! (although 86.♗c6? looks similar to 86.♗b7, we will soon see that this makes all the difference between drawing and losing: 86...♔f4 87.♗d7 g5 88.a4 g4 89.a5 g3 90.a6 g2 91.a7 g1♕ 92.a8♕ ♕d1+!-+; the whole point!) 86...h3 (86...♔f4 87.♗c8 g5 88.a4 g4 89.a5 h3 90.a6 h2 91.a7 h1♕ 92.a8♕=) 87.♗c8+ ♔h4 88.♗b7=.

B) 79...g5 80.hxg5 ♔xg5 81.♔b3 h4 82.♔xb4 e4 83.♔xa3 ♔g4 84.♔b4 f4 (we saw this idea earlier) 85.♗xe4 f3 86.♗c6 h3 87.♗d7+ ♔h4 88.♗c6=.

80.♔b3



TASK 10: *Find the only way for Black to hold the position. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

80...♔e5??

This is a big blunder and could have easily backfired had White played correctly. To be fair, both players were running short of time, and this was already a long game and tiredness was setting in as well. It goes to show the importance of having strong nerves and good stamina.

A) 80...e3?? 81.fxe3+ ♔xe3 82.♔xb4 f4 83.♗d5 (83.♔xa3? f3 84.♗h1 f2 85.♗g2 ♔e2 86.♔b4 f1♕ 87.♗xf1+ ♔xf1 88.a4 g5 89.hxg5 h4 90.g6 h3 91.g7 h2 92.g8♕ h1♕ 93.♕c4+ ♔f2=) 83...f3 84.♔xa3 f2 85.♗c4+-;

B) 80...♔g4? 81.♔xb4 ♔xh4 82.♔xa3 e3 83.fxe3 ♔g3 84.♗c6+-;

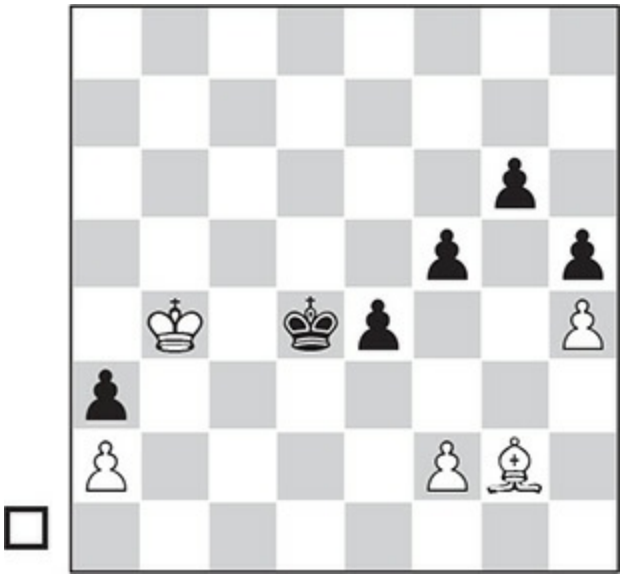
C) 80...g5! is the only move: 81.hxg5 ♔xg5 82.♔xb4 ♔g4 83.♔xa3 h4 84.♔b4 f4!, transposing to our by now familiar drawing mechanism: 85.♗xe4 f3 86.♗c6 h3 87.♗d7+=.

81.♔xb4

It is White who is now winning.

81...♔d4

81...f4 82.♔xa3+-.

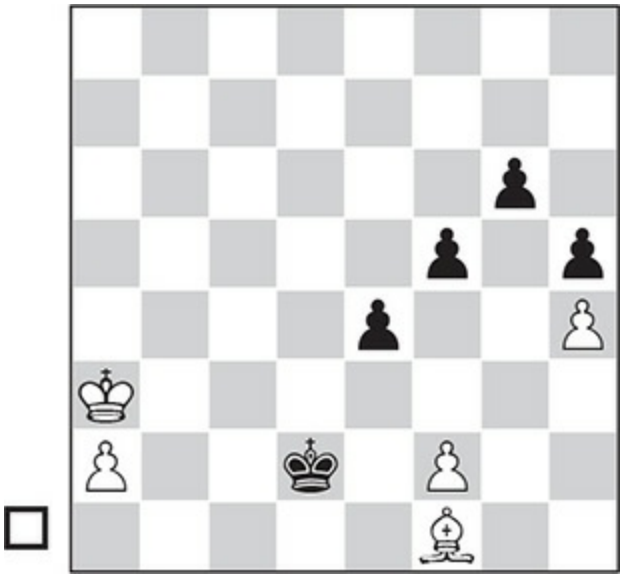


TASK 11: *White to play and win. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

82.♔xa3??

This natural move throws away the win. A nice reverse manoeuvre of bringing the bishop outside Black's pawn wall, this time once again to take squares away from Black's king, is the only way to win: 82.♗f1! f4 83.♗b5! (this puts Black in zugzwang by not allowing the black king to improve its position; 83.♔xa3? still threw away the win: 83...♔c3! 84.♗g2 e3 85.fxe3 fxe3 86.♗f3 ♔d3 87.♔b2 e2 88.♗xe2+ ♔xe2 89.♔c3 ♔f2 90.a4 g5 91.hxg5 h4=) 83...e3 84.fxe3+ ♔xe3 85.♔xa3+-.

82...♔d3= 83.♗f1+ ♔d2



TASK 12: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

Find a creative way for White to make a draw.

84.♔b2!?

84.f3! exf3 (84...e3?? 85.♔b4 g5 86.hxg5 h4 87.g6 h3 88.g7 h2 89.g8♕ h1♕ 90.♕d5++-) 85.♔b2 f2 86.a4 ♔e1 87.♗h3 f1♗ 88.♗xf1 ♔xf1 89.a5 f4 90.a6 f3 91.a7 ♔g1 92.a8♕ f2. Due to the positioning of the remaining pawns on the kingside, this position is a draw.

84...♔e1 85.♗c4 ♔xf2 86.a4 e3 87.a5 f4 88.a6 f3 89.a7 e2 90.a8♕ e1♕.

91.♕d5 ♔g2 92.♗d3??

Finally, it is White's turn to blunder after all the hard work. Time trouble and nerves are the likely reasons.

92.♕g5+ ♕g3 93.♕f6 f2 94.♔c2=.

92...♕xh4-+ 93.♗e4 ♕f4 94.♔b1 h4 95.♗xg6 h3 96.♗e4 h2 97.♕g8+ ♔f2 98.♕a2+ ♔e3 99.♗xf3 ♕b4+ 100.♔c1 ♕e1+ 101.♗d1 ♕c3+ 102.♔b1 ♕b4+ 103.♔c1 ♕c5+ 104.♔b1 h1♕ 105.♕e2+ ♔f4

And White resigned.

After the piece sacrifice in the opposite-coloured bishops endgame, the game became incredibly tense. The fact that it was still in dynamic balance is not that relevant to a practical player. As we saw, all three results were possible at various points in time due to various mistakes by both sides. But this is only a natural consequence of Gupta's risk-taking idea, which let us observe

a heart-throbbing fight until the very end! Full credit to Gupta for the courageous decision and for making it work!

From this game, we can see another important aspect of practical play, i.e. the role of nerves and the necessity to keep as calm as possible under increasingly tense situations. In practice, each move has its impact, either positive or negative, over the course of the game, and the nature of the position keeps changing all the time. Chess has become more dynamic, and under the circumstances it is imperative that a player not only work on improving his chess skills but also learn to keep as calm and as in control as possible. Of course, the emotional fluctuations, ups and downs, our fears and nervousness can never be completely eradicated during a game, but the trick is not to let them get out of hand to the extent that it affects our concentration or objectivity. We should not let nature take its course, and learn to keep ourselves calm in tense situations.

The first step is to understand and accept the importance of keeping our emotions under reasonable control and not lose our objectivity and productivity. The next step is to identify and start practising some techniques that can help us in this direction. A few suggestions in this regard are:

1. breathing techniques: many courses can be found online.
2. meditation: again, many online and offline courses are available.
3. a sports psychologist.
4. reading motivational books.
5. autobiographies of top sportsmen to learn how they learnt to be tough.
6. keeping a calm mind off the board too!

Once we learn to make good-quality analysis, we will calculate variations with fewer mistakes. Our overall quality of thinking is improved, and a high-level quality of play is possible.

The mistakes made by a player rated 1200, 2000, 2300, 2500 or 2750 while analysing the same position are not the same. Similarly, two players who are rated similarly will make different types of mistakes while analysing.

Personal interpretation of chess terminology

There are some terms that chess players use casually, like tactics, calculations, sacrifice, combination, analysis, etc. When I was a player, I knew these terms but was unsure what they meant in clear terms, and if and how they are different from each other. Is there a need to understand these terms better?

After becoming a full-time chess coach, I worked in close quarters with many young players, observing and learning how they think, concentrate, analyse, evaluate, and make decisions. A better understanding of these terms will help us in training in these areas effectively.

1. Sacrifice:
Giving up material (trading a piece of a higher numerical value for a lesser one) to achieve a higher objective. For example, we sacrifice a pawn or an exchange to get an attack against the opponent's king or to make our pieces more active.

2. Tactics:
I would like to understand tactics as 'short-term calculation necessarily involving a sacrifice'. There are many tactical themes, like the pin, deflection, fork, double attack, skewer, underpromotion, back-rank mate, etc.

Players with poor tactical vision tend to overestimate the material value and follow the chess principles rigidly. They give too much importance to pawn structure and other positional aspects of the game rather than the initiative or attack. Other interesting observations about players with poor tactical vision are:

a) They overestimate the opponent's defensive resources, underestimate their own analytical skills (due to poor calculation skills), and, as a result, rarely make sacrifices, but

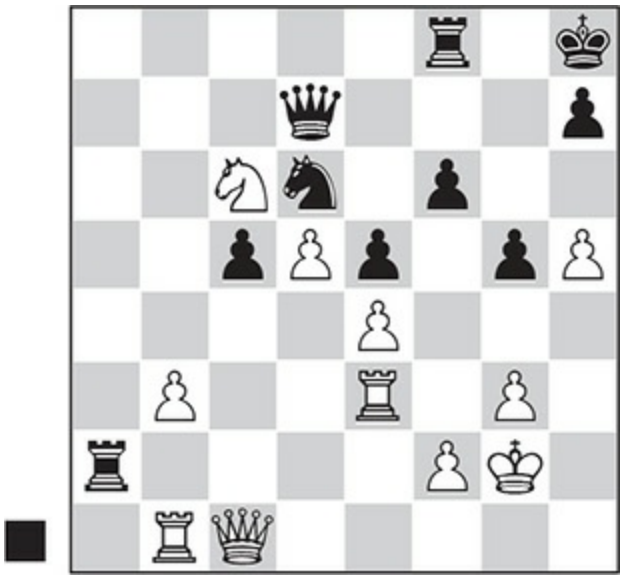
b) They also underestimate their defensive resources, overestimate their opponent's analytical skills, and rarely accept sacrifices when defending against an attack from the opponent.

Players with poor tactical skills will also find it tough to improve their calculation skills beyond a point. Their value systems are too rigid (valueing material too highly and following principles rigidly). They think more in general terms, are prone to be less alert and miss tactical opportunities. They give extra rope for the opponent to make compromises, as they do not punish the opponent's mistakes by taking appropriate risk.

Over some time, such players eventually turn into passive – weak in tactics – less alert – poor in attack – low in confidence – poor time management (as there are big holes in analytical skills) – dogmatic players. Such players are more likely to hit the stagnation phase and likely to remain there for a long time. It becomes a part of their personality, and it becomes very challenging to change them later.

It is clear that we should become good at spotting tactics as soon as possible, **not only for ourselves but also for our opponent**.

Game 43 Level 1
Manuel Rivas
Michael Adams
Las Palmas 1993



TASK 1: *Find a good way to equalise for Black. Time to think: 3 minutes.*

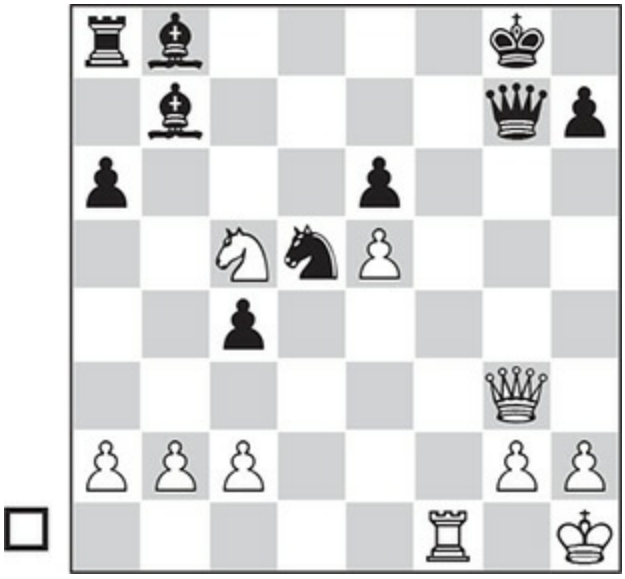
31...♘xe4! 32.♖xe4 ♕xd5=

Black will win back the material.

Game 44 Level 1

Emanuel Berg	2623
Veselin Topalov	2791

Dresden 2008 (9)



TASK 1: *Find the winning continuation for White. Time to think: 2 to 4 minutes.*

28.♖f8+!

28.♘xe6?? ♗xe5-+.

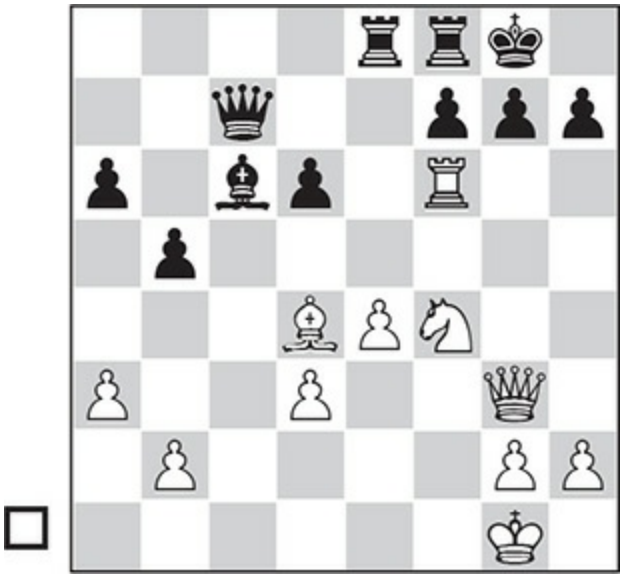
28...♕xf8 29.♘xe6++-

This is a position from game analysis, and not the main game.

Game 45 Level 1

Ramesh RB	2415
Rahul Shetty	2390

Kasaragod 1996 (13)



TASK 1: *Find the win for White. Time to think: 3 minutes.*

25.♕xg7+! ♔xg7 26.♖g6#

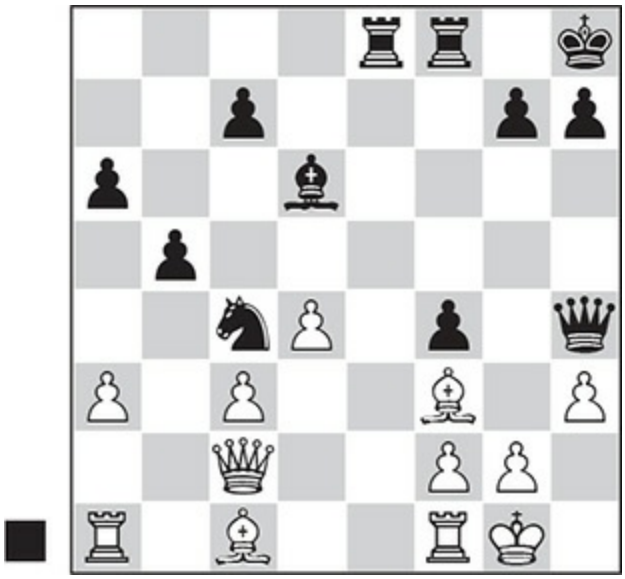
This position came from game analysis, and not the main game.

Game 46 Level 2

Ramesh RB

Ponnuswamy Konguvel

Kasaragod ch-IND 1996 (2)



TASK 1: *Find Black's best continuation. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

We can see that all of Black's pieces are ideally placed, whereas White is yet to complete his development. It is the right time for Black to force things so that White will not have the resources to meet them, as he is still not yet fully developed:

27...♘e3! 28.fxe3

28.♗xe3 fxe3 29.fxe3 ♕g3-+.

28...fxe3 29.♗xe3 ♕g3

29...♖xe3 was good enough as well. In positions with opposite-coloured bishops, the side with attacking chances or a positional advantage will have the better prospects.

30.♕d2 ♖e6!?

The rooks can be doubled in multiple ways.

31.♖a2 ♖ef6! 32.♕d1 ♖e8 33.♕c1 ♕h2+ 34.♔f2 ♕g3+ 35.♔g1 ♕h2+ 36.♔f2 ♗g3+ 37.♔e2 ♗f4!

Eventually Black wins back his piece with a king stuck in the centre for White.

38.♔d1 ♖xe3! 39.♕c2 ♕g3! 40.a4 ♖fe6??

This quite unexpectedly allows White back into the game. However, one has to say that the way White creates counterplay is not at all obvious.

40...c5 41.axb5 c4 42.♖xa6 ♖d3+ 43.♕xd3 cxd3 44.♖a8+ ♗b8, and Black should win this.

41.♕f5 ♖e8 42.♔c2??

This move loses; instead White had a way to actually save the game:
42.♗e2!, and suddenly White gets a playable position again! 42...♖3e4 43.♖f3! ♕h2 44.♖f1 c5 (44...b4? 45.♗d3+-) 45.♖d2 c4! 46.♗f3 ♖4e6! 47.♗c6 ♖f6 48.♖e2 ♖ef8 49.♕d5∞.

42...♖xf3!

Black is winning again.

43.gxf3 ♕g2+ 44.♔b3 ♕xf1 45.♕xf4 ♕c4+ 46.♔a3

46.♔b2 ♖e2+ 47.♔c1 ♕xa2 48.♕f8+ ♕g8-+.

46...♕xc3#

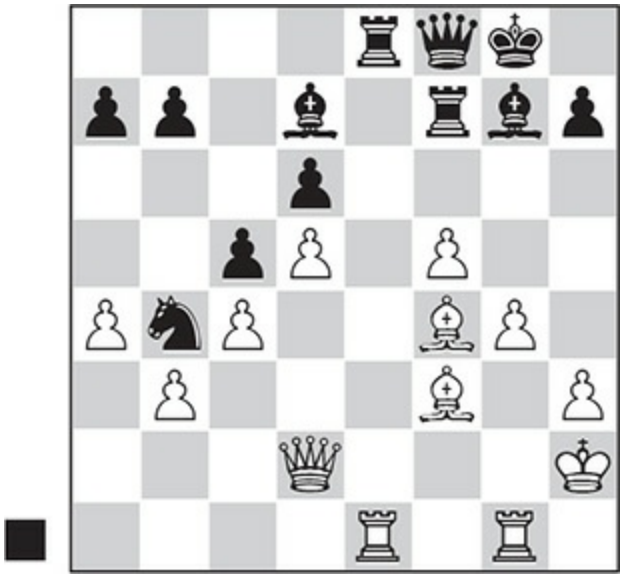
3. Combination:

A short- to medium-term calculation combining multiple tactical themes mentioned in point 2 above.

Game 47 Level 1

Zoltan Gyimesi	2594
Sergei Movsesian	2711

Croatia tt 2009 (2)



TASK 1: *Find a forced win for Black. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

30...♖xe1! 31.♖xe1

31.♕xe1 ♘d3 32.♕d2 ♘xf4 33.♕xf4 ♗e5-+.

31...♗xf5! 32.gxf5 ♖xf5

The ♗f4 is pinned, since if it moves the ♗f3 is lost. It is possible that many players would stop here and conclude their analysis as winning for Black. We should push ourselves a little more and find the following moves as well:

33.♖e4 ♖xf4! 34.♖xf4 ♗e5

A different pin!

35.♔g3 ♕f5!

One of the threats is to play ...♘d3 on the next move.

36.♗e2

36.♗g4 ♕d3+!-+.

36...h5!

White is completely paralysed.

37.♔f3 ♕xh3+ 38.♔f2 ♕h2+ 39.♔f3 ♘c2!

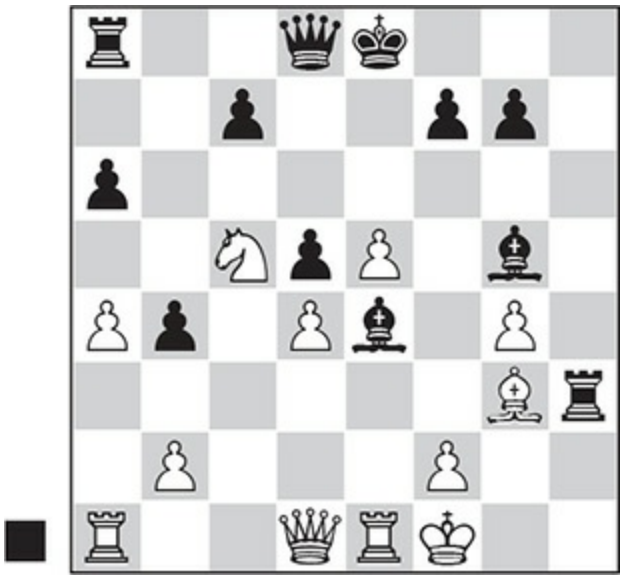
Decoy.

40.♕xc2 ♕xf4+ 41.♔g2 ♕g3+ 42.♔f1 ♗d4 43.♗d3 ♔f7 44.♗f5 ♕f3+ 0-1

Game 48 Level 2

Poorna Mithrakanth

Ramesh RB



TASK 1: *Find the best continuation for Black and analyse it well. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

22...♗d2! 23.♖xe4?!

A) 23.♕xd2?! ♗f3-+;

B) Initially, the engine considers 23.♔e2!? as giving a satisfactory position for White, but slowly it changes its opinion in Black's favour: 23...♗xe1 24.♕xe1 ♕g5! 25.f3 (25.♘xe4 dxe4-+).

analysis diagram

Here, 25...f5! is the only move that proves Black's advantage (25...♗f5? 26.♔f2∞): 26.exf6 (26.♕f2 f4 27.♗h2 ♗xf3+ 28.♕xf3 ♖xh2+-+) 26...♕xf6 27.fxe4 ♕xd4-+;

C) 23.♕b3!? is another move that the engine liked initially: 23...♗xe1 24.♖xe1 ♖h1+ 25.♔e2 ♖xe1+ 26.♔xe1 ♕g5 27.f3 ♕c1+ 28.♔f2 ♕c2+ (again, only this move establishes Black's advantage) 29.♕xc2 ♗xc2∓.

23...♖h1+ 24.♔g2 ♖xd1 25.♖xd1 dxe4 26.♖xd2 ♕d5-+

4. Strategy

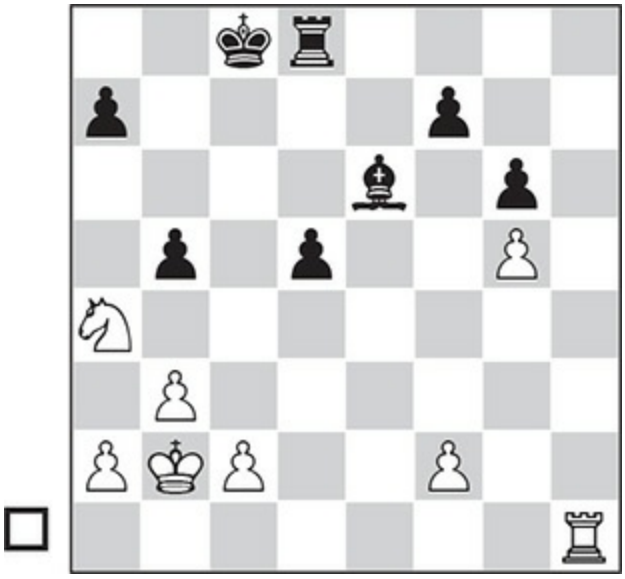
Either dynamic or static or a combination of dynamic and static means (in layman terms, tactical or positional means) to attain a beneficial objective, not time-specific. It can be either a short- or a long-term objective, but the importance lies in the essential nature of our objective. One can compare this with the military analogy of strategic targets or strategic operations.

Game 49 Level 4

Murray Chandler

Otto Borik

Germany Bundesliga 1982/83



Although at the outset, this position looks very calm and positional in nature, we can see that behind the scenes, a lot of dynamics are in play.
Modern chess is largely about combining dynamic and static elements effectively to achieve our objective.

24.♘c5

If Black is not careful, White can achieve complete control over the dark squares with his pieces, and it will be tough for Black to put up resistance after that.

24...♗f5?!

24...d4 gives Black a comfortable position: 25.b4 ♖d5 26.f4 ♖f5⇋, followed by ...♗c4, and Black's pieces are active enough.

25.♖h7

25.♖e1 ♖h8⇋.

25...♖f8!

A passive but correct decision. Many times in chess, we are faced with situations where we have to do things that we are not happy to do but we must do them anyway, and this is one such moment.

A) 25...♖e8?, threatening 26...♖e2. Usually, this is the right way to approach such positions where one side can be forced into perpetual passivity if we take one incorrect passive decision, but unfortunately for Black it does not work here:

A1) 26.♖xf7! is the correct order:

A11) 26...b4? 27.♘a6+-;

A12) 26...d4!? looks positionally sound as it fixes the c2-pawn on a light colour as a target and prevents White's king from becoming active, but White has 27.♔c1!. In this instance, by stopping White from becoming active, Black literally forced him to go slightly passive and keep the advantage anyway! 27...♖e2 28.♘d3± ♗xd3 29.cxd3 ♖xa2 30.f4 ♔d8 31.♖f6 ♖f2.

analysis diagram

Now White should bring his king up and dislodge the black rook to win the g6-pawn. But before implementing his plan, he should stop Black's counterplay on the queenside: 32.b4! (first White calmly fixes the queenside pawns, thereby neutralising Black's extra pawn advantage on the queenside) 32...♔e7 33.♔d1 ♖f3 34.♔e2 ♖e3+ 35.♔f2! ♖xd3 36.♖xg6+ and the connected pawns will win the game for White;

A13) 26...♖e2 27.♔c3! ♖xc2+ 28.♔d4!±; we saw this position earlier. If we change the move order, the same idea is not as effective:

A2) 26.♔c3?! ♖e7⇆. This is clearly a better place for the rook than on f8, as in the game. Instead, 26...♖e2?! turns into mistimed activity because 27.♖xf7 ♖xc2+ 28.♔d4! (28.♔b4? d4⇆) simply forces White to take the same path by playing even more actively, and as a reward he gets a better position! 28...♖xf2 29.a3! (there is really no need to give up a pawn with 29.♖xa7 ♔b8 30.♖b7+! ♔c8 31.♖f7 ♖xa2). The king activities are in stark contrast in this position. Another point to note is that even though the bishop looks active, it really has no target, whereas the white knight can help the other two pieces to weave a mating net around the black king.

B) 25...d4!? will transpose to another line we saw above: 26.♖xf7 ♖e8! 27.♔c1 (27.♖xa7? ♖e2) 27...♖e2 28.♘d3±.

26.♔c3

26.b4!? is the other approach, trying to relocate the knight to d4 via b3: 26...♔c7 27.♘b3 ♔d6 28.f4 ♗e6 29.♘d4 a6. Black gets sufficient counterplay here. Whenever White removes the rook from the seventh rank, Black will occupy the e-file with his rook, for example 30.♖h2 ♖e8 31.♖e2 (31.c3 ♗d7) 31...♖h8↰. In this line, we can see that White's king is left out of the action, which is one of the reasons Black manages to equalise. In comparison, Black king is active enough.

26...♔c7

Black's king matches White's king in terms of activity.

27.♔d4

27...a5!

Before White gets everything he wants with the b3-b4 bind, Black gets his own counterplay going on the queenside.

27...♗xc2?? is too greedy because of 28.♘e6++-.

28.c3

28.♔xd5?! ♖d8+ 29.♔e5 ♔c6. Just look at the black pieces and enjoy the coordination! Compare it with a few moves earlier and we can appreciate the difference! 30.♘d3 ♖d5+!? (this is possibly more accurate than taking on d3) 31.♔f4 ♗xd3 32.cxd3 ♖f5+=. A slight change in the plan and nothing else!

28...♔c6⇆

Black does the right thing, by giving the defensive job to the king.

29.a3 f6?!

An important turning point in the game. Black loses patience as it so often happens and goes for activity with this pawn break, but it activates White's rook more than anything else. As we shall see soon, White's rook will create havoc on both sides of the board. Black has been patient so far and managed to come very close to equalising.

A) 29...♗c2 30.b4 a4!⇆ (30...axb4? 31.axb4 ♔d6 32.f3 ♗f5± ; 30...f6? 31.♖a7+-) 31.f3 ♔d6;

B) 29...a4 30.b4 ♔d6⇆ was a wise method. Black can simply wait with his king by moving back and forth to c6 and d6, and it is very tough for White to improve his position.

30.gxf6 ♖xf6 31.♖a7

White is threatening 32.♖a6 check and also threatening the a5-pawn.

31...♗c8!

This passive-looking move prevents 32.♖a6+ but also opens the f-file for the rook.

32.♘d3!

32.♖a8 ♖f4+ 33.♔e5 ♖f5+ 34.♔d4 ♖f4+ 35.♔e3. After driving the king back, Black goes for defence: 35...♖f8 36.b4 (36.♘d3 g5) 36...a4 with equality; passive defence works in this case.

32...♔b6?

After this, White did not give Black any chance and it was downhill all the way.

How should Black have continued here to get counterplay?

A) 32...g5!⇆ was essential, to gain space and fix the f2-pawn, thereby tying down the ♘d3 to its defence for a while. Also it gives Black's rook the possibility to move along the 6th rank in the event of ♖f7 by White in some cases: 33.♖f7!? (33.♖g7 g4 34.♖g6 ♖xg6 35.♘e5+ ♔d6 36.♘xg6 ♗f5 37.♘e5 ♗e6, and Black can hold this) 33...♖h6 (one of the virtues of 32...g5) 34.♖f8! (34.♘e5+ ♔d6) 34...♗d7!? 35.♘e5+ ♔d6 36.♘f7+ ♔e7 37.♘xh6 ♔xf8 38.f3 (it is essential to get the knight out) 38...♔e7 39.♔e5.

analysis diagram

This position looks very dangerous for Black, but his next move shows that he still has resources: 39...b4! (a very important move) 40.cxb4 axb4 41.axb4 (41.a4 ♗xa4 42.♘f5+ is good enough to maintain the balance) 41...d4!? 42.♔xd4 ♗c6 43.♔e3 ♔e6, and despite being two pawns down, Black can easily hold this position to a draw;

B) Instead, 32...♗b7? loses instructively:

B1) 33.♘e5+?! ♔c7 and now:

B11) It looks like 34.♖xa5 wins a pawn without counterplay, but it is just an illusion: 34...♖xf2 35.♖xb5 ♖f4+ (35...g5 is also good enough) 36.♔c5 (36.♔e3? ♖e4+; 36.♔d3? ♗a6) 36...♖f5! 37.♔d4 (37.♘xg6?? d4+-+) 37...♖f4+ with a forced draw;

B12) 34.♔c5!? is a very interesting attempt to play for a win but it's not enough either: 34...♖f5 (34...♖xf2?? 35.♘c6! (threatening 36.♘a5) 35...d4!? (threatening 36...♖f5 check) 36.♘xa5 dxc3 37.♖xb7+ ♔c8 38.♔b6+-) 35.♘xg6 is the simplest way to equalise. Instead, 35.f4?! is quite risky for White, and he should be accurate to survive after this. As a coach, I like to give as many interesting positions as possible to my students, especially positions where they have to solve interesting problems. Hence, let us see this variation to improve our defensive skills in a tough position:

35...g5 36.♖xa5! (White aims to remove all the black pawns from the board and make a draw) 36...gxf4 37.♘d3! (37.♘f3?? d4+-+) 37...f3

analysis diagram

38.a4! (again, the only move for White; 38.♖xb5?? is just a blunder due to 38...d4+ 39.♔b4 ♖xb5+ 40.♔xb5 dxc3-+) 38...f2 39.♘xf2 bxa4 40.♖xa4 ♖xf2 41.c4=; the last pawn is exchanged and it is a draw;

B13) 34.♘d7!? ♔xd7 35.♖xb7+ ♔c6 36.♖g7 ♖xf2 37.♖xg6+ ♔b7 38.♔xd5 ♖f3, and again Black escapes.

B2) 33.♖xa5! ♔b6 34.♘c5! (a temporary sacrifice turns the game around for White; as it happens, the natural 34.b4?! fails to meet the requirements of the position: 34...♗c6⇋ and the white rook will feel very odd on the 'out'-post!) 34...♔xa5 (34...♖f4+ 35.♔e3+-) 35.b4+ ♔b6 36.♘d7++-.

33.♖g7± ♗f5?!

33...♗h3 was the last chance to put up some resistance: 34.f3 ♖xf3 35.♖xg6+ ♔c7 36.♘e5! ♖f5 37.♖c6+ ♔b7 38.♖h6 ♗g2 (38...♗f1 39.♘c6 a4 40.b4±) 39.♘c6 a4 40.b4 ♖g5 41.♘e5±.

34.♘e5!

Accurate until the end.

34.♘f4?, going for a rook and pawn ending, was not the right way to play for a win: 34...♗e4 35.♘xd5+ ♗xd5 36.♔xd5 ♖xf2 37.♖xg6+ ♔b7 38.♔c5 ♖f5+=.

34...♖d6

34...b4 35.cxb4 axb4 36.a4! ♖d6 37.a5+ ♔xa5 38.♔c5+-.

35.b4 axb4 36.axb4

Now we can see that the pawn on g6 is not helping the black rook to have more space to move about or threaten the f2-pawn.

36...♗c2 37.♖d7! ♖xd7

37...♖f6 38.f3! g5 39.♖xd5+-.

38.♘xd7+

This ending is completely lost for Black. White's king and knight will take most of the enemy pawns from the board soon.

38...♔c6 39.♘f6 ♗b3

39...♔d6 40.♘xd5 ♗d1 41.♘f6 ♗c2 42.♘g4 ♗f5 43.♘e5 ♗c2 44.f4 ♗f5 45.c4 bxc4 46.♔xc4.

40.♔e5 ♗c4 41.♘h7 ♗a2 42.♘f8 ♗b1 43.♘e6 ♗a2 44.♘d4+ ♔b6 45.♔d6 ♗c4 46.♘e6 ♗b3 47.♘f4 g5 48.♘xd5+ ♔b7 49.♘f6 ♔b6 50.♘d7+ 1-0

5. Calculation

This is the process of trying to look ahead in the position, in a series of White and Black moves, usually of a forcing nature, and not necessarily involving tactics or combinations, to achieve a concrete aim. Sometimes, the purpose can be as mundane as to just try to understand what is going on!

An effort to calculate usually involves brute force where the direct solution to the problem ahead of us is sought. It is possible to calculate without any sacrifice, tactics, combination, strategy, or relying on our memory, or following chess principles.

We use other tools such as mentioned above in the calculation process only on a needs basis. When we do that, we enter the sphere of analysis. As we can see, we make use of calculation to aid the process of analysis.

Calculating lines is very much an integral part of the analytical process.

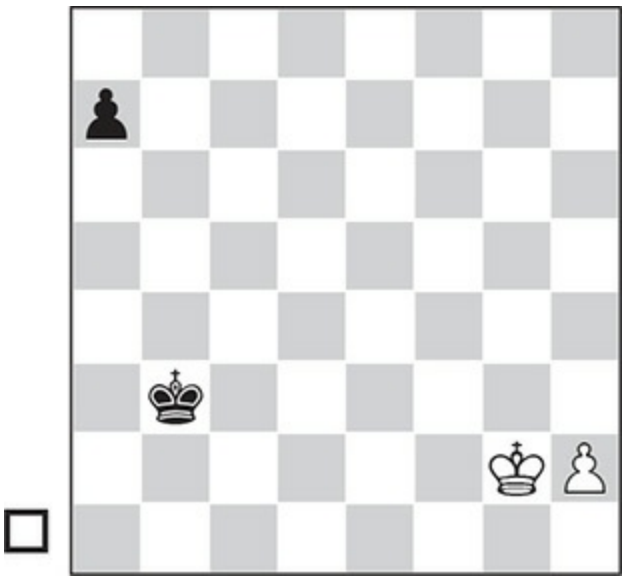
Calculation is a deliberate process where we force ourselves to think concretely and not in general terms. We control our thinking process by using specific methods like visualisation, candidate moves, elimination, forcing moves, the drawback principle, comparison, move orders, finding good defensive resources for the opponent, etc.

We force ourselves to concentrate better, as otherwise we will not be able to calculate accurately. We push ourselves to be alert, so we don't miss the not so obvious, difficult-to-see, hidden possibilities for ourselves and our opponent. So, when we train to improve our calculation skills, we are also forced to work on our concentration, alertness, etc. By doing calculation training, we positively impact the quality of our analysis by cultivating supplementary qualities like concentration, attention, tactical vision, attacking skills, defensive skills, etc.

Variations are simply branches in our calculation. Sometimes, the moves in the analysis are apparent and easy to spot. Sometimes, some moves are not easy to find and will require a much more disciplined, persistent, and determined effort from the player.

Let us now see a few positions for different levels and test our visualisation and calculation skills.

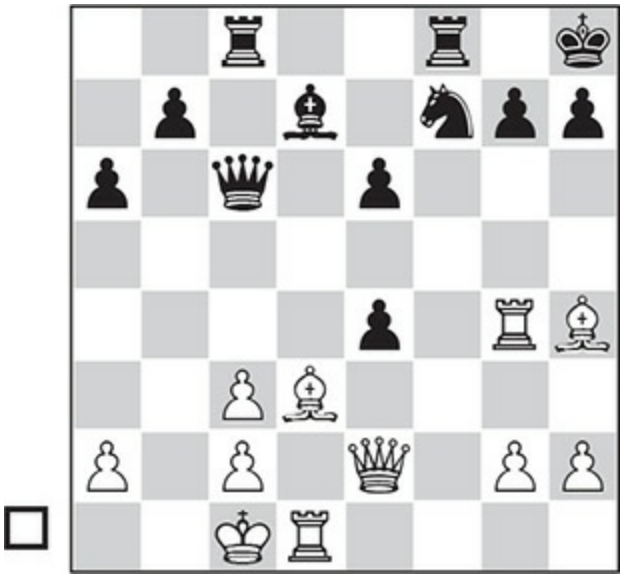
Game 50 Level 1
Constructed position



White to play and win. Time to think: 2 minutes.

Here, it will help a player to be able to see what is likely to happen in the future in a simple and straight-forward variation:
1.h4 a5 2.h5 a4 3.h6 a3 4.h7 a2 5.h8♕ a1♕ 6.♕xa1
As we can see, there are no clever moves that White or Black needs to find in this variation. Both sides should just advance their pawns and White eventually wins by promoting first. At the upcoming players level, this ability to see a few moves ahead is very useful. At the intermediate level, the ability to see a few moves ahead, along with the ability to find a few tough moves and calculate a few branches, will be ideal. At the advanced player level, the same should be done for much more complex situations seamlessly.
Another important requirement at the intermediate and higher levels will be to apply chess principles, logic, common sense, our knowledge, our ability to recollect and apply similar patterns or ideas seen earlier, etc., along with calculating concrete moves.

Game 51 Level 2
Ramesh RB 2456
Abhijit Kunte 2477
Torquay 2002 (9)



TASK 1: *Find the winning continuation for White. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

24.♖xg7!!

White's king is a bit exposed, so he needs to be quick in accelerating the play. This move completely shatters Black's undefended kingside at the expense of a rook!

24...exd3

A) 24...♔xg7 25.♕g4+ ♘g5 26.♕xg5+ ♔h8 27.♗g3! ♖f5 28.♗e5+ ♖xe5 29.♕xe5+ ♔g8 30.♗xe4 ♕c7 31.♕g5+ ♔h8 32.♕f6+ ♔g8 33.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 34.♖d4+-;

B) 24...♘h6 25.♖xh7+ ♔xh7 26.♗xe4++-;

C) 24...♕xc3 25.♖xh7+ ♔xh7 26.♗xe4++-.

25.♗f6!

A) 25.♕h5? ♔xg7 26.♕g4+ ♔h6! 27.♕f4+ ♔h5!-+ 28.♖xd3 e5;

B) 25.♖g8+ ♖xg8 26.♗f6+ ♖g7-+;

C) 25.♖xh7+? ♔xh7-+ 26.♕xd3+ ♔h6 27.♕e3+ ♔h5-+.

25...♕xc3

A) 25...dxe2 26.♖g6#;

B) 25...e5 26.♕xd3 e4 27.♕xe4 ♕xe4 28.♖g6#;

C) 25...♘h6 26.♗e5!.

26.♖g8+ 1-0

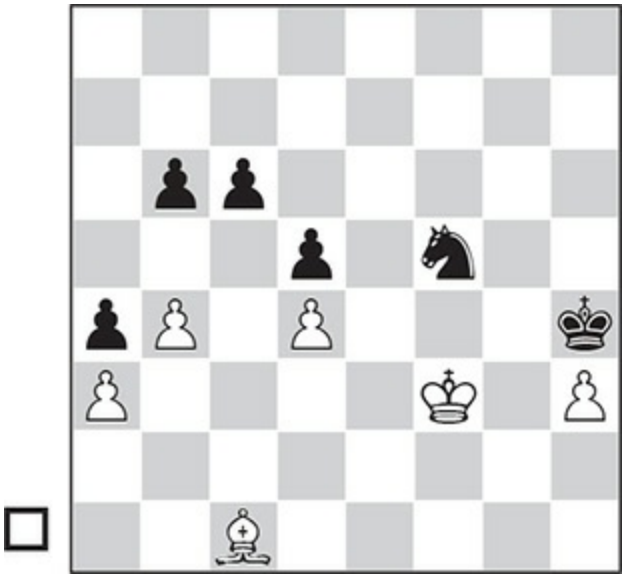
26...♔xg8 27.♕g4+ ♘g5 28.♕xg5+ ♔f7 29.♕g7+ ♔e8 30.♕e7#.

Also, 26.♖xh7+! ♔xh7 27.♕e4+ (27.♕h5+? ♘h6 28.♗xc3 ♖xc3∓) 27...♔h6 28.♗xc3 ♖xc3 29.♖f1+-.

Game 52 Level 3

Dennis Wagner	2590
Parham Maghsoodloo	2674

Moscow 2020 (6)



TASK 1: *White to play and equalise. Time to think: 10 minutes.*

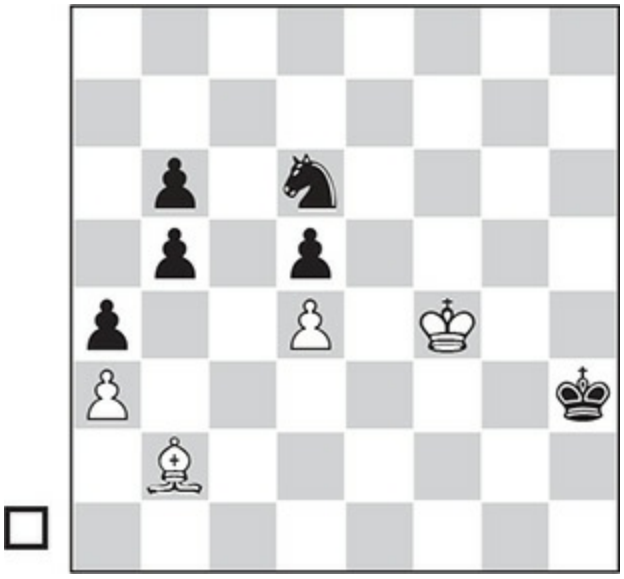
51.♔f4??

... was the game continuation. White is now simply lost, with the bishop not in a position to handle the advancing black pawns, a typical 'phant problem'. 51.♗b2! allows White to hold on to his weak pawn on d4, before activating his king to go after Black's queenside pawns and taking advantage of the distant position of Black's king: 51...♔xh3 (51...b5 52.♔f4 ♘d6 53.♗c1 ♘c4 54.♔f5 ♔xh3 55.♔e6 ♔g4 56.♔d7 ♔f3 57.♔xc6 ♔e4 58.♔xb5 ♔xd4 59.♔xa4 ♔c3=) and now:

A) 52.♔f4?? ♘d6 53.♗c1 ♔g2 54.♔e5 ♘b5! (once Black's knight occupies the ideal b5-square and his king goes to e4, it becomes tough for White) 55.♗b2 (55.♔e6 ♔f3 56.♔d7 ♘xd4 57.♗b2 ♔e4 58.♔c7 b5 59.♔b6 ♔d3 60.♔c5 ♘c2 61.♔xc6 ♔c4-+) 55...♔f3 56.♔e6 ♔e4

57.♕d7 ♘xd4-+;

B) 52.b5! (once the pawn structure on the queenside is compromised, White's active king can calmly take those loose pawns) 52...cxb5 (52...c5?? 53.dxc5 bxc5 54.♗e5!+-) 53.♕f4 (53.♗c3? ♘d6 54.♗b4 ♘c4 and it becomes tough for White to take the king quickly to the queenside, due to the barrier with the knight and the d5-pawn: 55.♗e7 ♘a5 56.♗b4 ♘c6-+) 53...♘d6 (53...♘e7 54.♕e5)



analysis diagram

TASK 2: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

54.♗c1! ♘c4 55.♕f5 (White's king has a clear path to the queenside via e6-d5-c6-b5 before Black's king can take the first step) 55...b4 (an interesting attempt to play for a win. Black does not want to lose any more time and tries to create his own passed pawn to force things) 56.axb4 a3 57.♗xa3! (the whole point behind White's concept. The bishop sacrifices itself for the dangerous passed pawn, while the king will round up the remaining black pawns and reach a draw) 57...♘xa3 58.♕e5 ♘c2 (58...♕g4 59.♕xd5 ♕f5 60.♕c6 b5 61.d5 and the passed pawn on the d-file will be good enough to save the game, e.g. 58...b5 59.♕xd5 ♕g4 60.♕c6=) 59.♕xd5! ♘xb4+ 60.♕c4 followed by ♕b5 and White wins the last pawn and achieves the

draw.

51...♘xd4 52.♔e5 ♘b5! 53.♔e6 ♘xa3! 54.♔d6

54.♗xa3 d4.

54...d4 55.♔xc6 d3 56.♔xb6 ♘c4+ 57.♔b5 a3-+

We can see that the bishop is not able to handle the two distant passed pawns – the 'phant problem'.

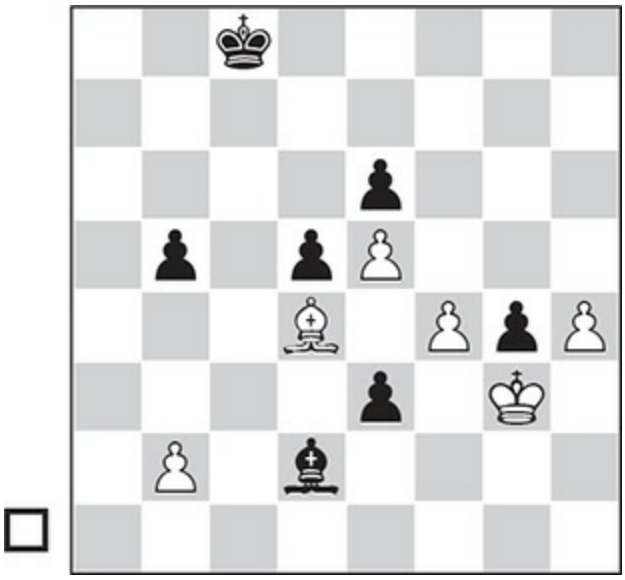
Game 53 Level 4

Alexey Suetin

Eduard Gufeld

Tbilisi 1969

I gave the following position to an online student rated around 2200 USCF. I have given his reactions over the course of the analysis.



TASK 1: *Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

52.h5!

52.♗c3?? ♗xc3 53.bxc3 d4 54.cxd4 b4-+.

52...e2 53.♗f2 e1♕

53...♗e3? has no threat, other than losing time in the process: 54.h6 wins for White. Not 54.♗e1? d4 55.h6 d3 56.h7 d2 57.h8♕+ ♔c7! (57...♔b7 58.♗xd2 ♗xd2 59.♕h1+ ♔c7 60.♔f2+-). This whole variation is

interesting mainly due to this nuance. While calculating variations purely for training purposes, we should not be too objective and be open for considering certain lines for their creativity, nuances or beauty, and training our brain to consider all kinds of moves and variations. 58.♗xd2 ♗xd2, and it is Black who is playing for a win here as the checks will soon run out for White.

54.♗xe1 ♗xe1+ 55.♔xg4 ♗b4 56.h6

56.f5 ♗d2 57.fxe6 (57.f6 ♔d7) 57...♔d8 58.♔f5 ♔e7.

56...♗f8 57.h7 ♗g7

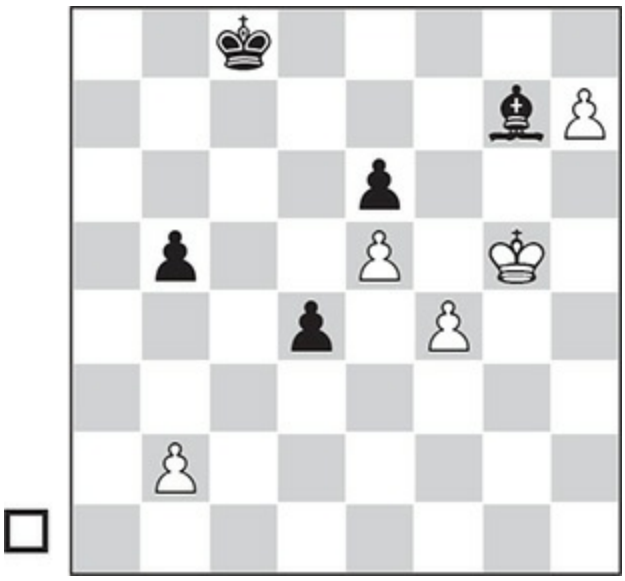
Until this point, the moves by both sides were more or less forced.

58.♔g5

Some students get too attracted to this move, which can be refuted in multiple ways: 58...♗xe5 (58...♔d7 59.f6 ♗h8 is also winning for Black) 59.fxe6 ♔d8-+.

58...d4??

58...♗h8! is the correct move order: 59.♔g6 (59.f5?? will backfire badly on White after 59...exf5 60.e6 ♔d8-+) 59...d4 (only now is this move working) 60.f5 d3 61.fxe6, transposing to what happened in the game. **TIP:** Pay attention to the exact move order in which our idea should be implemented. At many times, our ideas are good but the problem lies in the implementation.



TASK 2: *Find the win for White after 58...d4??. Time to think: 3 to 5*

minutes.

59.♔g6?

Both players made some mistakes at this point.

59.f5! is the refutation of 58...d4. The student subconsciously rejected this move because it did not work in the previous variation. This is another common mistake by inexperienced players while calculating variations. If some idea does not work in one particular position, they eliminate that idea altogether from their mind, concluding that it will never work. But in chess, the dynamics keep changing all the time.

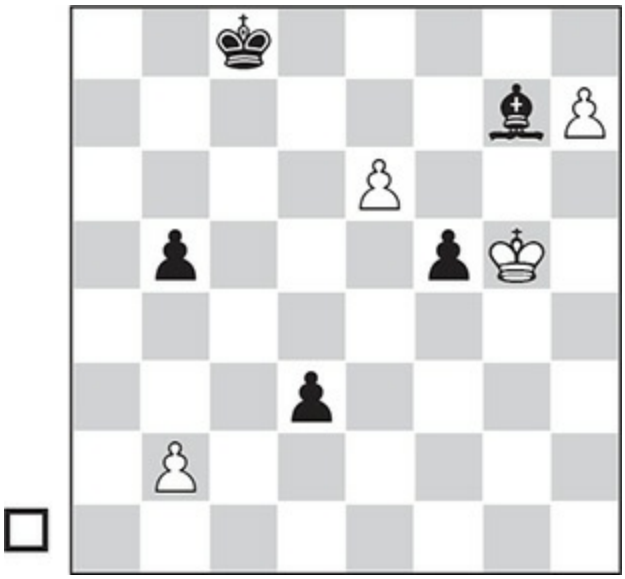
Our understanding of a position increases with each variation we see, whether it works in our favour or not, in the course of our analysis. We should not permanently reject an idea because it did not work in a particular position. Due to a change in the dynamics, the same idea could work on subsequent moves. If we are able to understand this, it means we are not just seeing variations but we are also gaining a deeper understanding about the changing dynamics and their influence on the position.

After 59...exf5 (59...d3 60.f6, and White is quicker: 59...♗h8 60.f6 ♔d7 61.♔f4: the ♗h8 is dead for all practical reasons and Black's king will be tied to White's passed pawn on f6. This means that White's king can calmly collect the remaining pawns and win: 59...♗xe5 60.f6+-), the student said White's two main options were 60.♔xf5 and 60.e6:

A) Even though the student felt 60.♔xf5?? was a serious option for White, it simply does not make sense. It doesn't try to stop the d4-pawn or aid in the advance of White's pawns in the race. I am not against considering such moves in the analytical process, but it is important to also refute bad ideas or moves quickly, so that we can focus our effort, energy and time on the important alternatives. Basically, we have to improve the efficiency in our thinking process. 60...d3 wins straightaway;

B) After 60.e6, I asked the student if he could visualise the position clearly in his mind. Even though he said yes, he had assumed that the black pawn was on d5 instead of d4. Only with regular training in the calculation of variations without moving pieces on the board, can a player solve this

problem. 60...d3



analysis diagram

TASK 3: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

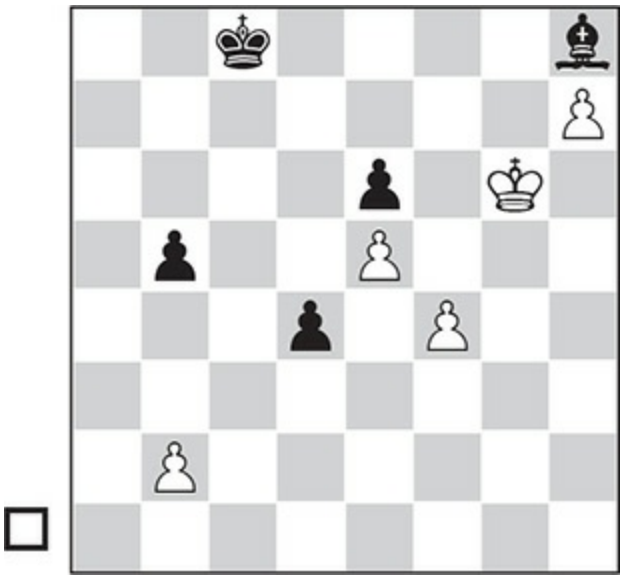
61.♔g6! (61.e7? ♔d7 62.♔g6 ♔xe7 63.♔xg7 d2 64.h8♕ d1♕ 65.♕f8+ ♔d7 66.♕xf5+=) 61...d2 (61...♗h8 62.e7 ♔d7 63.♔f7+-) 62.♔xg7 (62.e7 d1♕ 63.e8♕+ ♔b7 64.♔xg7 is also winning for White) 62...d1♕ 63.h8♕+ and now:

B1) 63...♔b7 64.e7 ♕d4+ 65.♔g8 ♕d5+ (since Black's king is far from the e-pawn, he cannot go to a pawn ending by trading queens) 66.♔f8 (White's pawn on e7 has more value than Black's pawn on f5 due to its advanced position; moreover, the black pawn on f5 helps to act as an umbrella for White's king against queen checks) 66...♕d6 67.♕h1+ ♔b6 68.♔f7 ♕d7 69.♕a8+-;

B2) 63... ♔c7 64.♕h2+ (64.e7?? ♕d4+ 65.♔g8 and here the student missed the idea of 65...♕xh8+ followed by ...♔d7, winning for Black; this is a symptom of underestimating the opponent's resources) 64...♔c8 (64...♔b7 65.♕e5 or 65.e7 ♕d4+ 66.♔f7 ♕d5+ 67.♔f8+-) 65.e7 (65.♕e5+–; centralising the queen in such endings is one of the most important tools) 65...♔d7 (65...♕d4+ 66.♔f7 ♕d5+ 67.♔f8 and thanks to Black's f5-pawn,

White's king is safe from checks) 66.♔f8+-.

59...♗h8



TASK 4: *Analyse the next few moves correctly. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

60.f5 d3

More or less forced: 60...exf5? 61.e6!+-; 60...♔d7 61.♔f7!+-.

61.fxe6

61.f6? is too hasty: 61...♔d8!-+.

61...d2 62.e7 d1♕ 63.e8♕+

Until this point, we can see that the moves were more or less forced for both sides. The process of analysing requires us to find the best moves at each turn for both White and Black. In this process, some moves by White and some moves by Black will be forced, and some will not be. The mistakes usually happen at those moments when the moves are not forced. Whenever we realise we have made some mistake in the analysis, it makes sense to go to these exact moments in our variation where the moves were not forced and look for alternatives.

63...♕d8

63...♔c7? 64.♕xh8 ♕g4+ 65.♔f7 ♕d7+ (65...♕c4+ 66.e6+-; 65...♕f5+ 66.♔e7 ♕d7+ 67.♔f6+-; 65...♕h5+ 66.♔f8 ♕f5+ 67.♕f6+-) 66.♔f6 and White wins with purposeful play.

White has two advanced pawns as compensation for a bishop. The position is complex with a material imbalance, and it is useful to train ourselves in handling such positions.

64.♕c6+

64.♕xb5?! ♕e7, and Black gets sufficient counterplay.

64...♔b8

64...♕c7? is simply losing after 65.♕xc7+ ♔xc7 66.e6.

65.♔f7!

A fantastic way to keep the tension in the game alive and play for a win.

65.♕xb5+? ♔a7 66.♔f7 ♕c7+=.

65...♔a7!

65...♕g5?, threatening all kinds of checks: 66.♕e8+ ♔c7 67.♕xh8 ♕h5+ 68.♔e7 ♕h4+ 69.♕f6 ♕xh7+ 70.♕f7 and White wins with his extra pawn, e.g. 65...♗xe5 66.♕xb5+ ♔a8 67.♕xe5+-.

Objectively, the position is equal with correct play from both sides, but that is precisely the problem!

66.♕d6!?

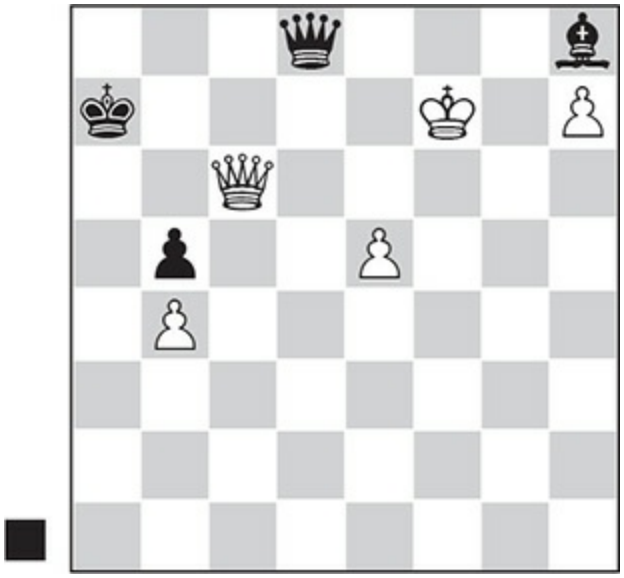
Exploiting the poor position of Black's king in the corner.

A) 66.♕c5+ ♔b7 67.♕xb5+ ♔a7;

B) 66.e6 ♕f6+ 67.♔e8 ♕g6+ 68.♔d7 ♕xh7+ 69.e7 ♗xb2=;

C) 66.b4!? was suggested by Praggnanandhaa (solving the position from

the initial position without moving pieces on the board). Practically, this is a very difficult move to meet over the board.



analysis diagram

TASK 5: *How should Black defend after 66.b4!? ? Time to think: 5 minutes.*

C1) 66...♕d3? 67.♕c5+ ♔b7 (67...♔a8 68.♕f8+ ♔b7 69.♕e7+ ♔a8 70.♕e8+ ♔b7 71.♔g8!+-) 68.♕e7+! ♔c8 69.♕e8+ ♔b7 70.♔g8! (70.♕xh8? ♕d7+=) – an ingenious way to win the bishop, beautifully dominated by the white queen and bishop;

C2) 66...♗xe5? 67.♕c5+ ♔a8 68.♕xe5 ♕c7+!? (trying for stalemate) 69.♕e7 ♕c4+ 70.♔f8 ♕f4+ 71.♔e8 and Black quickly runs out of checks. One important skill to acquire is to escape the opponent's checks in queen and pawn endings, which will be very useful in practical play;

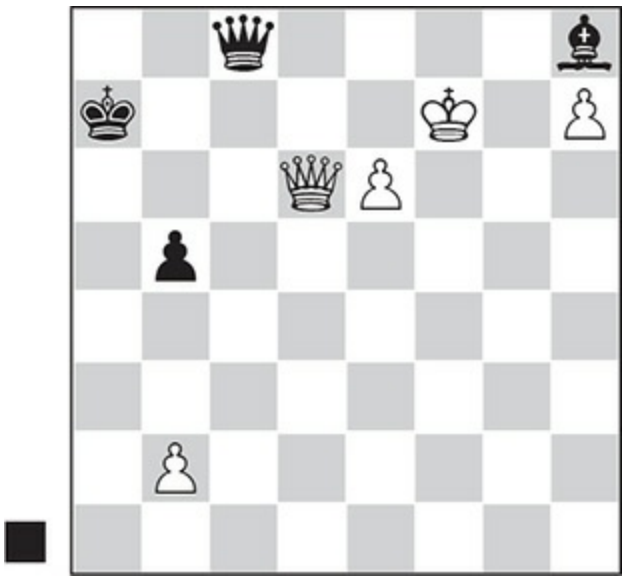
C3) 66...♕b8? 67.♕c5+ ♔a8 68.e6 ♕f4+ 69.♔g8+-;

C4) 66...♕d4!. As it happens, centralisation works most of the time! 67.♕c7+ (67.♕c5+!? ♕xc5 68.bxc5 b4 69.e6 b3 70.e7 b2 71.e8♕ b1♕ 72.♕xh8 ♕f5+ and the unfortunate position of the white queen in the corner of the board and the exposed position of White's king ensure a draw for Black) 67...♔a8 68.♕c8+ (68.♕a5+ ♔b7 69.♕xb5+ ♔c7! 70.♕c5+ ♕xc5 71.bxc5 ♗xe5, and Black survives) 68...♔a7 69.♕xh8 ♕d7+ 70.♔g6

(70.♔f6 ♕c6+ 71.♔f5 ♕f3+=) 70...♕g4+ 71.♔f6 ♕f3+ 72.♔e7 ♕b7+ (White is unable to escape from the checks) 73.♔d6 ♕b6+ 74.♔d5 ♕b7+ 75.♔d4 ♕d7+ 76.♔e3 ♕h3+=.

66...♕c8! 67.e6

67.♕e7+ ♔a6=.



TASK 6: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

67...♕c2!

Targeting h7.

67...♗xb2 68.♕d7+ was the threat.

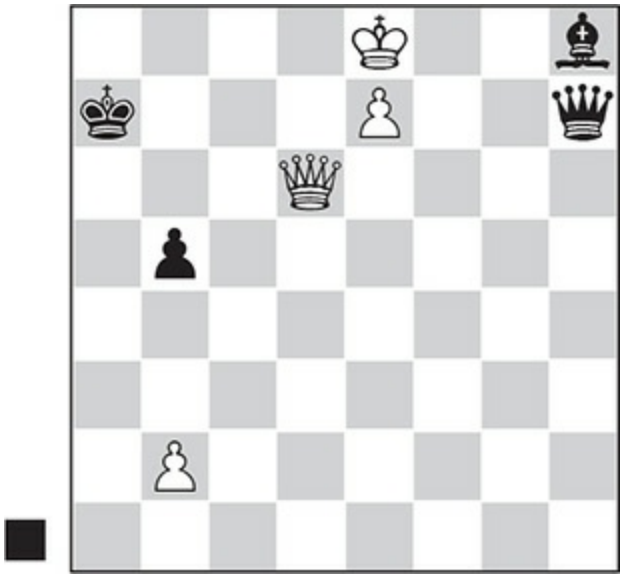
68.e7!?

A) 68.♔g8 ♗f6 (68...♕c8+? 69.♕f8 ♕xe6+ 70.♔xh8+-; 68...♕xb2? 69.♕c7+ ♔a6 70.♕f7!+-) 69.♕d7+ ♔a6 70.h8♕ ♕g6+! (70...♗xh8? 71.♔xh8 ♕xb2+ 72.♕g7 ♕h2+ 73.♔g8+-) 71.♕hg7 ♗xg7 72.♕f7!? ♕h6, and Black holds easily;

B) 68.♕e7+ ♔a6 69.♕a3+ ♔b6 70.♕e3+ ♔b7 71.e7?? ♕xh7+ 72.♔e8 ♕g8+ 73.♔d7 ♕c8+ 74.♔d6 ♕c6# is a pretty mate!

68...♕xh7+ 69.♔e8

69.♔e6 ♕h3+.



TASK 7: *Black has to play a series of only moves to save the game. Find them. Time to think: 3 minutes.*

69...♗xb2!

There is simply no safe square for Black's bishop on the entire diagonal other than this one.

70.♔d8 ♕h4 71.♔c8 ♕e4! 72.♕c5+

Not 72.♕d7+ ♔b6, and suddenly White's king is caught in a mating net.

72...♔a6 73.♕d6+ ♔a7 74.♔d8!? ♕h4!

Transposing to the position we saw earlier in the game; 74...♕a8+? 75.♔d7!+-.

75.♕d7+!?

75.♔d7 is another winning attempt, but Black has his resources to hold the game: 75...♕h3+ 76.♔c6 ♕c3+ 77.♔xb5 ♕b3+.

75...♔b6 76.♕e6+ ♔b7 77.♕d5+ ♔b6!

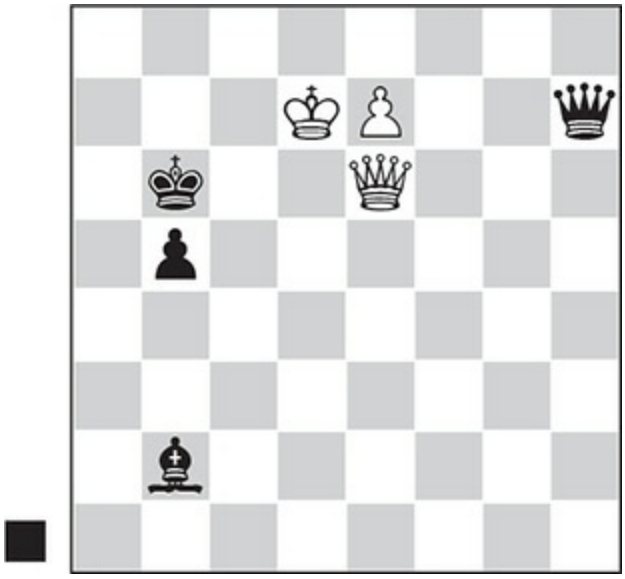
77...♔a7 78.♕a2+! ♔b6 79.♕xb2 and White should be able to win this position.

78.♔d7!? ♕h7!

A typical drawing mechanism in queen and pawn endings. When the pawn is far advanced, pinning it to prevent its advance is common.

78...♕h3+ 79.♕e6++-.

79.♕e6+



TASK 8: *Black to play and defend the position. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

79...♔a7??

After putting up a brilliant defence for so long, Black finally collapses under the intense pressure and makes a decisive mistake to lose the game.

79...♔b7! would have drawn, e.g. 80.♕d5+ ♔b6.

80.♔c8!

White is winning now, thanks to Black's blunder towards the very end.

80.♕a2+? ♔b7 81.♕xb2 ♕d3+=; 80.♔d8!+-.

80...♕c2+ 81.♔d8

Black is unable to pin the pawn.

81...♔b7 82.♕d7+ ♔b6 83.♕d6+ ♔b7 84.e8♕ ♗f6+ 85.♔d7

And Black resigned.

This goes to show how difficult it is psychologically to defend inferior positions over a long period of time. It takes a huge toll on the player's reserves of energy and gives a lot of stress. But just like what doing exercises does to the body, defending tough positions under stress makes us mentally tougher too in the long run.

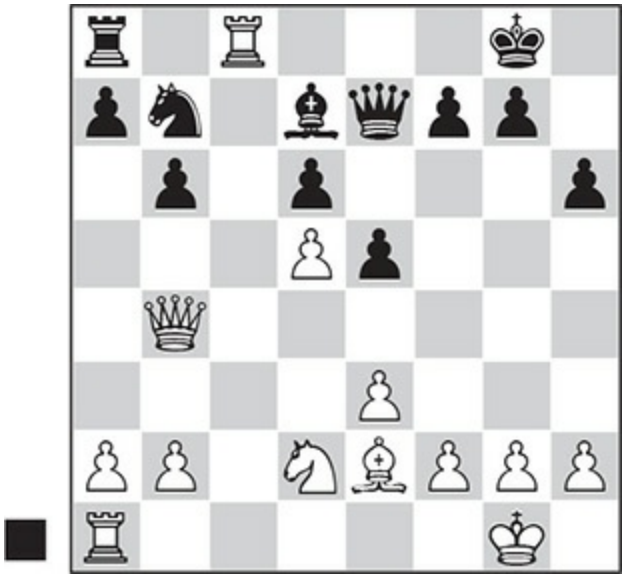
6. Analysis

While we are in the process of finding the best possible move, we analyse the position using various tools like calculation, prophylactic thinking, piece

improvement, pawn structure, weaknesses, space advantage, initiative, etc. We also use chess principles, our bank of knowledge, data stored in our memory, our experience, etc., to guide us in the right direction. The analytical process uses all kinds of positional, tactical, and strategic tools to understand the position better and find the best possible course of action. As we have seen, calculation is one part of the analysis, but an important part.

When we work to improve our calculation skills, it impacts positively on our overall analytical skills. But to improve our analytical skills, it is also essential to work on our positional understanding and our understanding of chess principles. We also need to know when to apply chess principles and when to ignore them, endgame skills, knowledge (information bank) in all aspects of the game, etc.

Game 54 Level 5
Haik Martirosyan 2597
Krishnan Sasikiran 2672
Batumi 2018 (9)



TASK 1: *What is the correct recapture? Justify with variations! Time to think: 10 minutes.*

19...♗xc8?

This looks like a strange move at first sight (yes it is a strange move!), but once we look a little deeper, we will realise that recapturing with the rook has a clear downside as well.

19...♖xc8! is the most obvious recapture and the most likely move in a blitz game. But then, why did Sasikiran, such a strong player, reject this and go for 19...♗xc8 ? He had calculated further and concluded that taking with the rook was most likely to lose a pawn for him. In such circumstances, an upcoming player is most likely to take on c8 with the bishop to not lose the pawn. But an experienced player will try to make the 19...♖xc8 capture work by investing more time and effort. Obviously, Sasikiran also invested more time and effort in trying to make the 19...♖xc8 capture work, but what went wrong? There could be various reasons:

1. In our analysis, we may have missed some important detail, and as a result we reject 19...♖xc8 as not working.

2. In the resulting evaluation of the position in our analysis, we may have drawn an incorrect conclusion. Perhaps we underestimated the amount of compensation Black gets after sacrificing the pawn, or we overestimated White's apparent advantage in our mind.

3. Our poor form (if any) may have affected our objectivity.

4. Sometimes we go through a bad phase in our career and our confidence level is not what it usually is. In such self-doubt situations, one can take pessimistic-view-based decisions during a game.

5. If our opponent is in great form, it can also affect our objective decision-making skills. We start seeing ghosts where none exist.

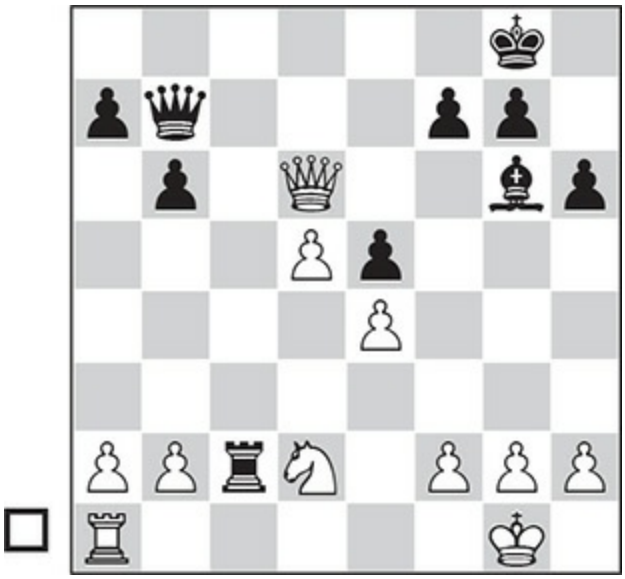
6. A lack of time to go deep into the position, and take the correct decision. Instead, we see some lines and, being short of time, we take more of an intuitive decision.

7. Tiredness, concentration lapses, lack of proper energy levels or rest etc., can be other possible reasons.

All this is simply guesswork and the real reason could be something else. But the above list can help us become aware that our decision-making is not like that of an engine. We are easily influenced by various factors. We have to make ourselves mentally tough too over the years so that the above factors do

not very often play such a part in our decision-making as it may have here. 20.♗a6. Again, here 20...♖c7! is the most obvious move, isn't it? We have to realise that what is obvious to us need not be so to others. For others, something we (dis-)missed entirely because it is not obvious to us could be the most obvious move. Hence, it is important to teach ourselves to think beyond the obvious. That is where candidate moves come in:

A) 20...♗f5? more or less leads by force to the position in the next diagram: 21.e4 (21.♗xb7?! ♕xb7 22.♕xd6 ♖c2 23.♕xe5 ♖xd2 24.♕xf5 ♕xd5 25.♕xd5 ♖xd5 26.b4 a5/; 21.♘c4 ♖c5) 21...♗g6 22.♗xb7 (22.♘c4?! ♗xe4 23.♘e3 (23.♗xb7 ♕xb7 24.♘xd6 ♕e7 25.a3 ♕g5!-+) 23...♗g6 24.♗xb7 ♕xb7 25.♕xd6=) 22...♕xb7 23.♕xd6! ♖c2 (23...f6 24.♖d1 or 24.♕b4±).



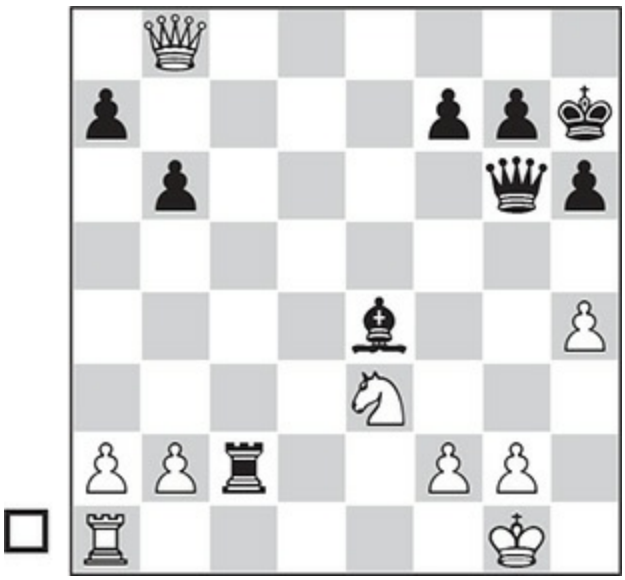
analysis diagram

Usually we stop at such a point and consider that Black has sufficient activity as compensation, but...

TASK 2: *Analyse to your best ability. Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

24.♘f1! (24.♖d1?! ♕a6⇋ and Black's king will feel very safe on h7) 24...♗xe4 (24...♖xb2? 25.♖c1+-) 25.♕xe5 (25.♘e3 ♕c7!=; 25...♖xb2?

26.♕xe5+-; 25...♖d2 26.♕xe5 ♗xd5 27.♕c3 ♖e2 28.♕d3±) 25...♕xd5 (25...♗xd5?! 26.♘e3 (26.♖d1! ♗e6=) 26...♖d2 27.♕c3 ♖e2 28.♕d3± ♖xe3 29.fxe3 ♗xg2 30.♖d1!± and even though Black has decent compensation, White should eventually convert this into a win) 26.♕b8+! (26.♕e8+ ♔h7? 27.♘e3 ♕c6!=, a pretty resource! Finding such resources for the opponent in our analysis shows we are progressing) 26...♔h7 27.♘e3 ♕g5 28.h4! (ideally, this move should also be found in our analysis from the previous diagram) 28...♕g6



analysis diagram

TASK 3: *Find the correct continuation for White. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

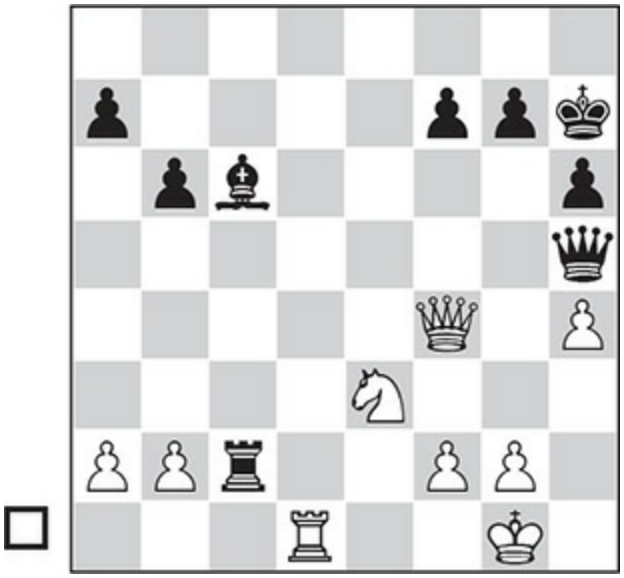
29.♖d1!, bringing the last resource into the scene of action (29.h5?! ♕g5 30.♕e8 ♗f3 31.♕xf7 ♗xh5 32.♕xa7 ♖xb2=). One of the threats is to play 30.♖d8 and create our own attack. We can see how useful h2-h4 was earlier. It clears our back rank and also forces Black's queen to occupy the g6 escape square for Black's king in the event of an attack along the 8th rank.

A1) 29...♖c5 30.♖d8+-;

A2) 29...♕h5 30.♕f4!+- is a very important resource. It defends both the f2- and the h4-pawn in the event of ♔h2, attacks Black's bishop, controls the

c1-square indirectly and sets up a possible double attack on Black's bishop and rook.

A21) 30...♗c6



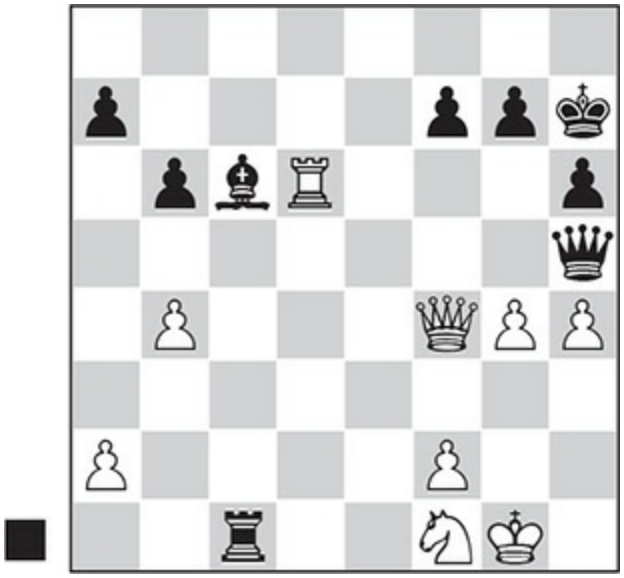
analysis diagram

TASK 4: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

31.♖d6! is a multi-purpose move again, freeing the ♘e3 from defending the rook, which means the rook on c2 and the bishop on c6 are under attack now. It also increases pressure on h6 (31.♕d6? ♖c5 32.b4 ♖c3 33.♕d4 ♖a3 34.♖c1 ♕g6 35.h5 ♕e6=; 31.f3? ♖xb2): 31...♖c5 (31...♖c1+ 32.♔h2 – Black's pieces are tied in knots and cannot move about freely without making concessions: 32...♖c5 33.b4 ♖c3 34.♘f5+- or 34.♕d4 ♖c1 35.♕d3+ g6 36.♕d4+-) 32.b4 ♖c3 and now:

A211) 33.b5 ♕xb5 34.♖xh6+ ♔g8!∞; 34...gxh6? 35.♕xf7+ ♔h8 36.♕f6+ ♔h7 37.♕xc3+- was suggested by Bhakthi Kulkarni, but she missed 37...♔g8. It's still a great effort, as she was analysing from the beginning of the position;

A212) 33.g4!? ♖c1+ 34.♘f1



analysis diagram

TASK 5: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

34...♕xh4! 35.♕f5+ g6! (Black will probably hold too after 35...♔g8 36.♕c8+ ♔h7 37.♖xc6 ♖xc6 38.♕xc6 ♕xg4+ 39.♕g2 ♕xb4, but it's not necessary when a simple alternative is available) 36.♕xf7+ ♔h8 37.♖xc6 ♖xf1+ 38.♔xf1 ♕h1+ 39.♔e2 ♕xc6=;

A213) 33.♘g4!, threatening 34.♖h6, and Black has no good defensive resource.

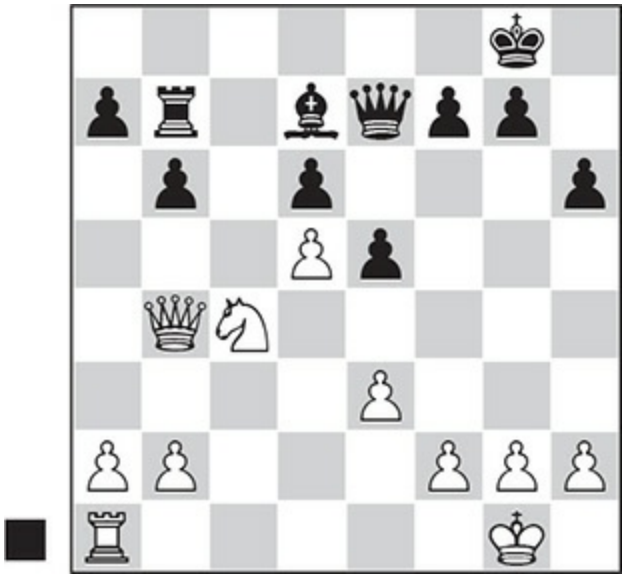
A22) 30...♗a8 31.♖d8 (a double attack on the bishop and rook) 31...♖c1+ 32.♘f1? (32.♔h2 ♗c6 (32...♗b7 33.♖d7) 33.♖c8) 32...♖b1 33.♖xa8 ♖xf1+=.

A3) 29...♗xg2 30.♘xg2 ♕f6 31.♕g3 ♖xb2 32.a3±. This is tough, but White should win this eventually. Pragg recalled his game against Nihal Sarin (Judit Polgar Challenge 2021, round 3) when we reached this point and said it was very similar. The ability to relate and recollect similar patterns is a virtue we need to cultivate consciously.

B) 20...♖c2? 21.♗xb7 a5 looks like a nice trick, but it does not work. 22.♕b3! is an important move, e.g. 22...♖xd2 (22...♗f5 23.♖d1!, threatening 24.e4, when everything is hanging in Black position) 23.♕c3

♖e2 24.♗a6! (not 24.♔f1?? ♗b5-+) 24...b5 25.♔f1! and the black rook will feel like a tiger caught in a mouse trap!;

C) We continue the line with the 'most obvious' move 20...♖c7! and now 21.♗xb7 ♖xb7 22.♘c4 (22.♖c1 f5∞). This is the main reason, I feel, why Black did not play 19....♖c8. But was the reason justified?



analysis diagram

TASK 6: *Find a good continuation for Black. Time to think: 7 to 10 minutes.*

C1) 22...♕g5! is objectively the best continuation. Whenever we are in danger of losing material, or when our king is coming under attack, or when our pieces are becoming too passive and cramped, it is the right time to look for an active counterattack. Most players go on the defensive in such situations, and as a result suffer longer and lose anyway. Playing actively gives us greater chances of solving the problem successfully. Only in rare cases should we adopt a passive defensive strategy. In general, I strongly believe that king safety and piece activity are more important than material. This means that we can sacrifice material (usually a pawn), for the following reasons:

1. to keep our king safe from attack or to slow down the opponent's attack on our king;

2. to make our opponent’s king weak or to prevent our opponent’s king from becoming safer;

3. to make our pieces more active;

4. to keep our opponent’s pieces passive.

C11) 23.♔h1?! ♕h4, pinning the ♘c4 and threatening the f2-pawn, is the drawback of 23.♔h1;

C12) 23.♕xd6 ♗h3 24.g3 ♖d7 (24...♕f5 25.♕d8+ ♔h7 26.♕h4 g5 27.g4 gxh4 28.gxf5 f6 29.♔h1 ♖c7 30.d6 ♖g7 31.♖g1 ♗xf5∞).

We can see the transformation clearly in just three moves: Black’s queen, bishop and rook have become more active than before. Most players give more importance to playing with equal pawns, and as a result will reject such pawn sacrifices from their analysis. Usually most players sacrifice material when they see a clear win in return! Otherwise, if the material sacrifice involves such things as long-term positional compensation, a gradual building up of an attack, a weakening of the opponent’s king position, or activation of our pieces without a visible immediate positive outcome, the material sacrifice is usually rejected. They fear the following:

1. What if I have made some mistake in my analysis and my opponent simply remains with extra material and I lose the game?

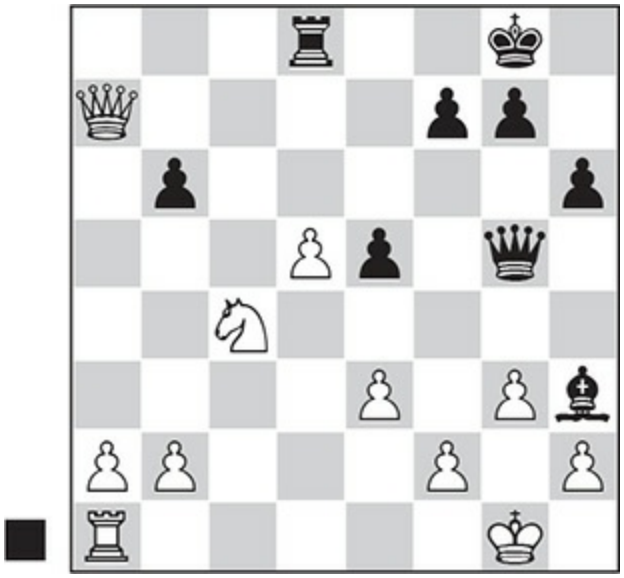
2. What if I have missed some clever defence for my opponent, he finds it, and I lose the game?

3. What if the compensation is not enough and I have over-estimated it in my analysis?

Such fears usually do not allow the player to bravely go ahead and sacrifice material. They give in to their fears and never learn to take calculated risks. It is essential that, in the early stages of our chess career, we learn the importance of sacrificing material. There are other important things in chess than material too.

25.♕b8+ (25.♕xe5 ♖xd5 is more or less the same) 25...♖d8 and now:

C121) 26.♕xa7



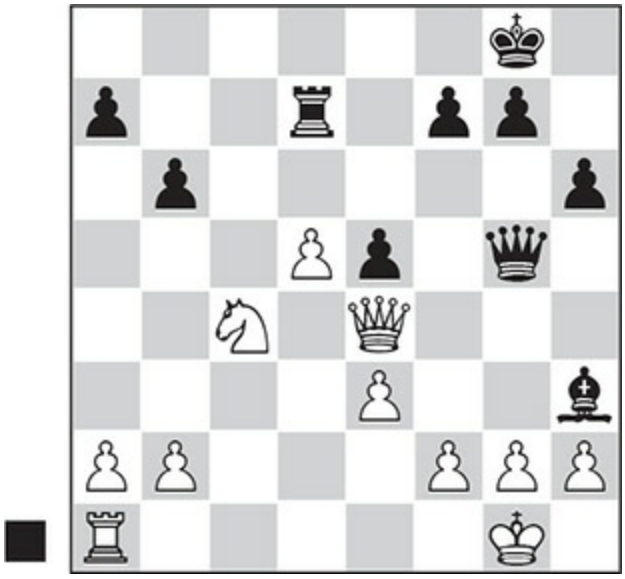
analysis diagram

TASK 7: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

26...♖c8! 27.♘d6 ♕f6!-+ or 27.b3 ♕f5-+;

C122) 26.♕xe5 ♖xd5 is more or less the same: 27.♕xg5 hxg5⩲. Black's pieces are extremely active, and White's king is unsafe, giving Black fantastic compensation.

C13) 23.♘xd6 ♗h3 24.♕e4 (24.g3?? loses by force but in a not so obvious way: 24...♖d7! (24...♕e7? 25.♖c1⇆) 25.♘c8 (trying to save the d5-pawn indirectly; 25.♖c1 ♕h5 26.♖c8+ ♔h7 27.♕e4+ f5-+) 25...a5! 26.♕e4 ♕d8-+) 24...♖d7 25.♘c4



analysis diagram

TASK 8: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

C131) 25...f5?? is a tempting move, but it fails to an interesting refutation: 26.f4! (26.♕f3 ♗g4 27.♕g3 f4) 26...♕g4 (26...fxe4 27.fxg5 ♗f5 28.♖d1+-, followed by ♘e5) 27.♕c2! exf4 28.d6! (threatening 29.♘e5 – a strange example of prophylaxis; the obvious 28.♘e5? backfires due to the unexpected 28...♖c7! 29.♕f2 fxe3 30.♘xg4 exf2+ 31.♘xf2 ♗g4=) 28...♕g5 (28...fxe3 29.♘e5+-) 29.exf4 ♕xf4 30.gxh3. White should consolidate in the next few moves and win the game, e.g. 30...b5 31.♘d2 ♖xd6 32.♕b3+ ♔h7 33.♘f3+-;

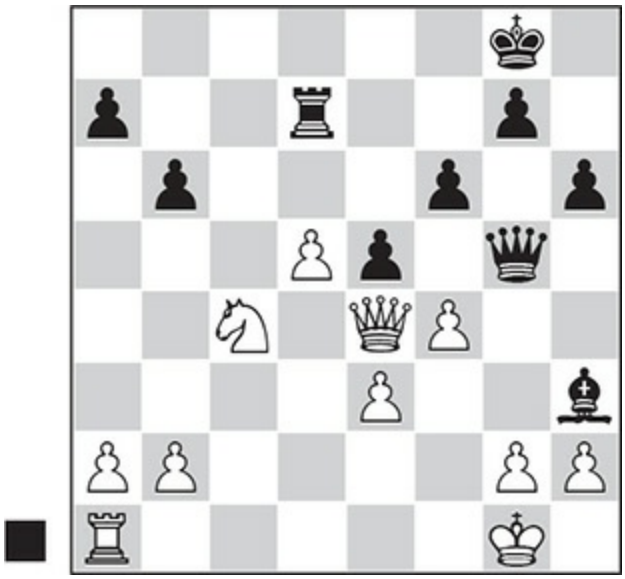
C132) 25...b5? 26.♘xe5 ♗xg2!?. This seems to come out of the blue, but 27.♕f4! is the counter-punch. If 27...♖xd5, 28.♕xf7+ ♔h7 29.f4! wraps up the proceedings for good;

C133) 25...f6! is an important move. Black is threatening to play 26...♗f5 27.♕f3 e4, winning back the d5-pawn. White has no good defence against this threat:

C1331) 26.♖d1?. White can even manage to lose the game in this way after 26...♗f5 27.♕f3 ♗g4-+;

C1332) 26.d6 b5=, as the d6-pawn is lost;

C1333) 26.f4?!



analysis diagram

TASK 9: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

26...♗f5!. Many players got stuck here as they could not assess the resulting variations correctly. 27.♕f3 (the spectacular 27.♕xe5 is met by the ultra cool 27...♕g6! (27...♕xg2+? 28.♔xg2 fxe5 29.♘xe5 ♗e4+ 30.♔f1 ♖xd5 31.♔e2±) 28.♕d4 ♗e4-+) 27...♕g6 (threatening 28...♗e4), 28.fxe5 ♗e4 29.♕g3 (29.♕f2 ♖xd5∓) 29...♕xg3 30.hxg3 ♖xd5 31.exf6 b5! 32.♘a3 a6! (the knight on the rim will lead to the downfall for White; 32...♖d2?! is a hasty move that unfortunately throws away all the hard work done this far by Black after 33.♘xb5⇆) 33.♖f1 ♖d2 34.♖f2 (34.♖f4 ♗xg2 35.♖f2 ♖xf2 36.♔xf2 ♗e4!∓) 34...♖xf2 35.♔xf2 gxf6. Despite being a pawn down, Black is going to win this ending;

C1334) 26.♖c1 ♗f5 27.♕f3 e4=. Black's decision to take some risk by sacrificing a pawn and trusting in his piece activity helped him come out of a tough situation safely.

C2) 22...♕h4! apparently gives good counterplay too:

analysis diagram

23.b3 b5! 24.a3 f5! with sufficient activity to keep the balance. As we see, the position is not so gloomy as it appeared earlier on. Most positions have resources, some are obvious and easy to find. Other resources are not obvious and require a lot of effort and skill from the player to bring them on the board. The homework and the training we undergo should enable us to acquire that skill.

C3) 22... ♖c7! is the other good resource.

analysis diagram

Both 22...♕g5 and 22...♖c7 have similar aims: to activate our passive queen, rook and bishop and get counterplay as a result.

C31) 23.♘xd6?! is obviously bad after 23...♖c5! (23...b5?! 24.♕a3 ♕f8∞) 24.♘c4 (24.♘e4?? ♖c1+-+) 24...♕h4! (24...♕f8 25.♖d1±; 24...♗b5?! 25.b3∞; 24...a5 25.♕b3 e4) 25.b3 ♖xd5∓;

C32) 23.♕xd6 ♕xd6 24.♘xd6 ♖c2 (24...♔f8!?⩲; 24...♖c5 25.e4 g6 26.b3 b5 27.b4 ♖c7 28.f3 ♔f8 29.♖d1!±) 25.b3 ♔f8! (25...♖d2? 26.e4±; 25...f5? 26.♘c4 e4 27.♘e5+-) 26.e4 (26.f3 ♔e7 (26...f6) 27.♘c4 f6 28.e4 g5) 26...f6 (26...♔e7 27.♘c4 f6 28.h4±) 27.f3 ♔e7 28.♘c4 g5⩲ or 28...h5 29.h4± and White has kept his extra pawn intact at the cost of a passive rook and king.

This is an important lesson for upcoming players. Make use of all your resources during all parts of the game. Irrespective of either material parity or material deficit, we should make use of all our units wisely. It is essential not to keep counting the pawns over and over again, reinforcing in our mind that we are playing a position with a pawn down. This will simply make us feel insecure and desperate to somehow win the pawn back. We should not sacrifice a pawn to simply regain it after a few more moves. Instead, we usually sacrifice pawn for a higher purpose, like an attack on our opponent's king or to activate our pieces. When we regain a pawn after sacrificing it, we usually lose the initiative or the attack on the opponent's king, or our active pieces will lose some of their activity – the reason why we gave the pawn in the first instance. In general, this should not happen when we regain our pawn. The advantages we have accumulated should remain intact as well.

20.♖c1?

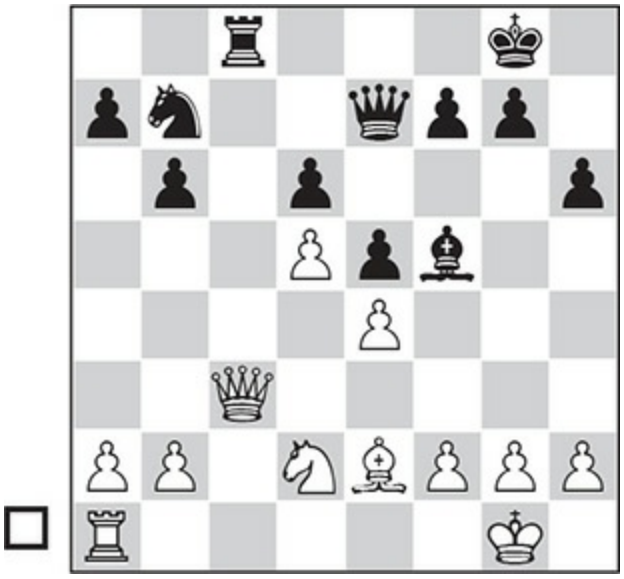
A natural-looking move, but not so good.

A) 20.♕a3 a5 21.b4 (21.♖c1 ♕d8!, followed by ...♗d7 and ...♘c5, equalises comfortably; not 21...♘c5 22.b4+-) 21...♕d8 22.♗b5 ♗d7 23.♗c6 axb4 24.♕xb4 ♗xc6 25.dxc6 ♘c5=;

B) 20.♗b5 ♗d7 21.♗c6 ♗xc6 22.dxc6 ♘a5 23.♖c1 ♖c8=;

C) 20.♘c4 ♕c7 21.♖c1 ♗d7=;

D) 20.♕c3! ♗f5 (20...♗d7? works against the 19.♖c1 and 20.♖c7 move order, but not against the same plan with the white queen: 21.♕c7 ♘c5 22.b4+-. As a result, Black is not able to complete his development in the manner he wants. He has to find an alternative way to do it, which creates its own issues*)* 21.e4 ♖c8



analysis diagram

TASK 10: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

D1) 22.♕a3?!. As usually happens, running with the queen to win such pawns will come with its own repercussions: 22...♗g6! (22...♕g5 23.♘f3! ♖c1+ 24.♗f1; 22...♖c2? 23.♕d3!+-) 23.♕xa7 ♖c2 24.♖d1 (24.♗a6? ♖xd2 25.♕xb7 (25.b4?? ♕h4 26.g3 ♕f6 27.♕xb6 ♘c5) 25...♕xb7 26.♗xb7 ♗xe4-+). Now:

D11) 24...♕g5? 25.h4! ♕xh4 26.♕xb7+-;

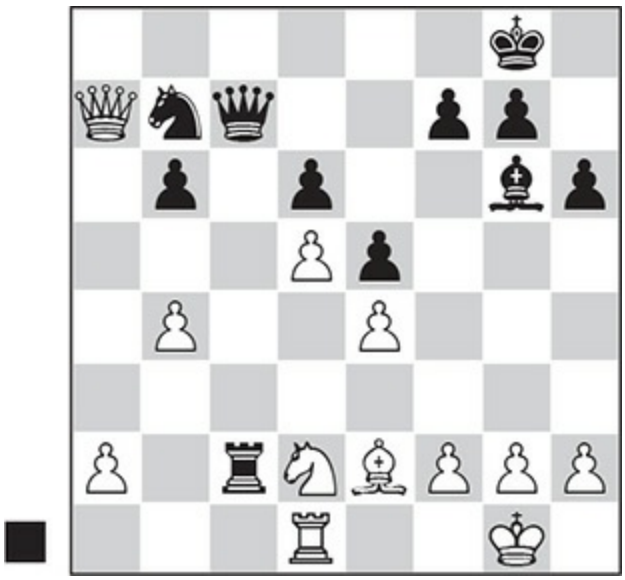
D12) 24...♖xb2! is also possible: 25.♗f1 (25.♗a6? ♗h5! 26.f3 ♕g5!-+) 25...♖c2! (25...♕c7? is hasty; 26.♘c4±) 26.f3 (26.♘c4 ♗xe4, and Black gets sufficient activity) 26...♕c7⇋;

D13) 24...♕c7!=. Again, Black's pieces come to life. Many times in chess, one of the important battles to be won is to put our pieces on active squares, while denying the same to our opponent.

D131) 25.♗f1? ♗h5! 26.f3 ♕c5+ 27.♔h1 ♘a5! (the white queen is cut off from the game, White's king is coming under increasing pressure and Black's pieces are extremely active) 28.♕a6 ♖xb2∓;

D132) 25.♕a3 ♘c5! 26.♗f3 (26.f3? b5!∓) 26...b5!∞. Black will play ...♕b6, adding pressure on the f2-pawn and threatening ...b5-b4. White will be forced to choose between keeping the queenside pawns intact and consolidating his position with ♕e3;

D133) 25.b4



analysis diagram

TASK 11: *Time to think: 3 minutes.*

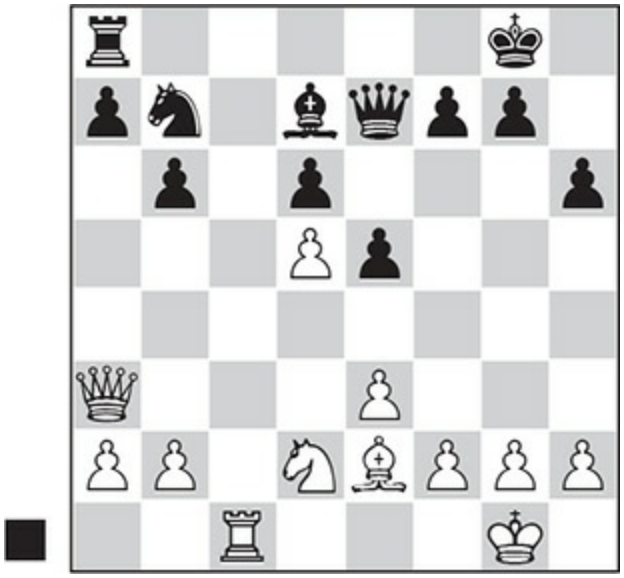
25...♕c3! (25...♗xe4 26.♘xe4 ♖xe2 27.♘g3 ♖b2) 26.♘b1 (26.♕xb6 ♖xd2 27.♖xd2 ♕xd2 28.♗f1 ♗xe4 29.♕xb7 ♕xa2=) 26...♕b2! and Black's activity is more than enough to at least maintain the balance (26...♕xb4 27.♗d3 ♖b2 28.♕xb7 ♕d4 29.♕c8+ ♔h7 30.♗c2!+-).

D2) 22.♕e3! ♗d7 (22...♗g6 23.b4 ♘b7 – Black will definitely not be happy after this – 23...f5 (23...♕c7 24.♗a6±) 24.exf5 ♗xf5 25.♘e4±) 23.♗a6 ♖c7 24.b4 and White retains a decent advantage. If, for instance, 24...♕g5 25.♘c4 ♕xe3 26.♘xe3±.

20...♘c5?

A) 20...♗d7! is one important way to equalise:

A1) 21.♕a3 is an interesting attempt to keep the black rook occupied with the a7-pawn.



analysis diagram

TASK 12: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

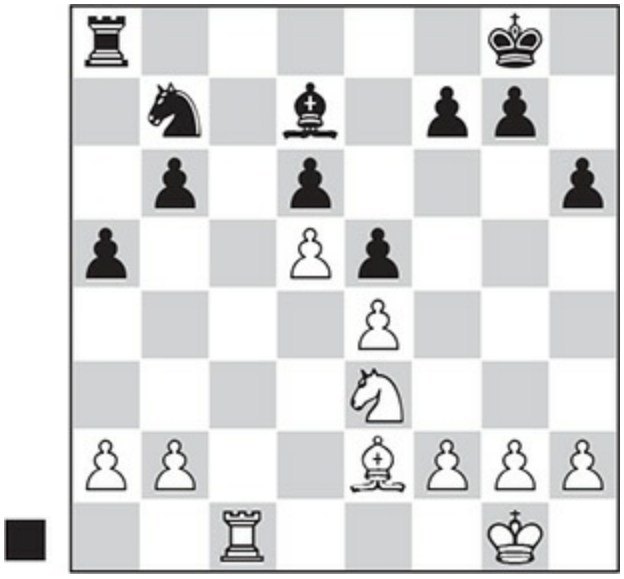
21...♕d8! keeps c7 under control, defends the ♖a8 and enables ...a7-a5 without worrying about b2-b4 from White: 22.♘e4 ♗f5 23.♘g3 ♗d7 24.♗a6 (24.♕a6 ♘c5; White cannot keep Black's knight away from c5 with 24.b4 since with 24...a5! Black grabs control of the c5-square anyway) 24...♘c5 25.b4 ♘xa6 26.♕xa6 ♖c8 (26...f5 27.h3 f4∞) 27.♖xc8 ♕xc8 28.♕xc8+ ♗xc8 29.♘e4 ♗b7=;

A2) 21.♖c7?! ♘c5 22.♕a3 a5 23.b4 (23.♘c4 ♕d8) 23...♕d8! (this is the reason why 20...♗d7 works. As you can see, many times in our games, we have to calculate one or a few important short lines to justify our positional decisions. If our calculation skills are not sufficiently developed, it affects us in every aspect of the game) 24.bxc5 ♕xc7 25.c6 ♗xc6 26.dxc6 ♕xc6.

B) 20...♗f5! is another way to solve Black's problems:

B1) 21.♕a3 and now:

B11) 21...a5? 22.e4 ♗d7 23.♘c4± ♕g5 24.♕e3 ♕xe3 25.♘xe3 (25.fxe3 ♖c8⇆)



analysis diagram

TASK 13: *Black's position looks questionable; how can he fight for counterplay? Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

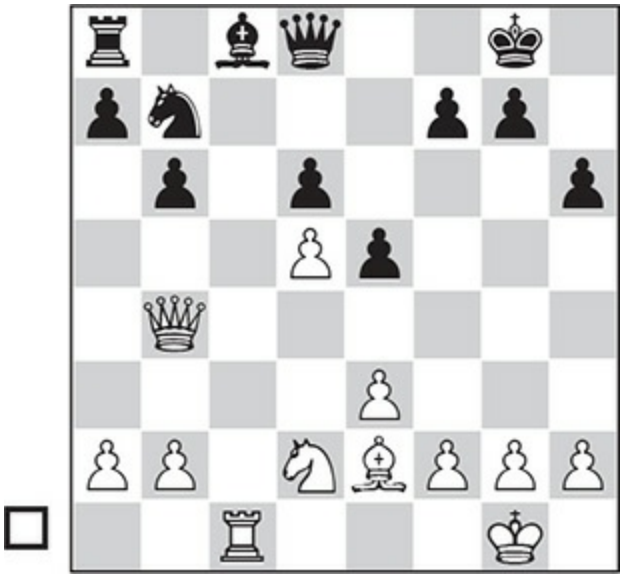
25...a4! is a very tough prophylactic move, the point of which will become apparent after Black's 29th move (if Black ignores White's main idea, he will get into trouble after 25...♔f8 26.♖c7 ♘c5 27.♘c4 ♗b5 28.♘xb6 ♖b8 29.♗xb5 ♖xb6 30.a4!± (to precisely avoid this bind, Black had to go for 25...a4!) 30...♘xe4 31.♖c6! ♖b8 32.f3 ♘f6 33.♖xd6±): 26.♖c7 ♘c5 27.♘c4 ♗b5 28.♘xb6 ♖b8 29.♗xb5 ♖xb6. Now White cannot play 30.a4 ! This is the point of 25....a4!;

B12) 21...♕d8! 22.♖c6! a5! (22...♗d7?! 23.b4! a5 24.b5± is a strong exchange sacrifice for an advanced passed pawn and control over the light squares) 23.♕b3 (23.♘c4 b5! 24.♘b6 (24.♘xd6?? b4) 24...b4 25.♕b3 (25.♕a4 ♖b8 26.♕d1 ♗d7=) 25...♖b8 26.♘c4 ♗d7=) 23...♗d7! (this phase of the game is very tough to play from Black's viewpoint. He has to be accurate so as not to get into big problems with a careless move) 24.♘c4 ♗xc6 25.dxc6 ♘c5 26.♕xb6 ♘e6! 27.♕xd8+ ♖xd8 28.♘xa5 ♖b8!=

(28...♖a8 29.b4±) 29.b3 ♔f8⇋.

B2) 21.e4 ♗d7 (21...♖c8? 22.♖xc8+ ♗xc8 23.♕c3+-) 22.♕a3 ♕d8 (by provoking 21.e4, Black denies White the option to go ♘e4 at this point, as in the previous variation) 23.♘c4 ♗b5 24.♕e3 ♗xc4 25.♖xc4 b5 26.♖c6 b4 27.g3 ♘c5 28.♗g4 a5 29.♔g2 ♕e7∞. Black has good control over the dark squares.

C) 20...♕d8



analysis diagram

TASK 14: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

C1) 21.♕c4? ♘c5 (21...♗f5? 22.♕c7 ♖c8 23.♕xd8+ ♘xd8 24.♖xc8 ♗xc8 25.♘e4 ♘b7 (25...♗b7 26.♗c4+-) 26.♗a6 ♔f8 27.b4 ♔e7 28.f3+-) 22.b4 ♗a6! (this is the reason why ♕c3 is better than ♕c4 on move 21) 23.♕g4 ♗c8 (23...♘d3 24.♖c6 ♘xb4 25.♕xb4 ♗xe2 26.♘e4) 24.♕f3 ♘a6 25.a3 ♘c7=;

C2) 21.♕c3! ♘c5 (21...♗d7 22.♕c7 ♖c8 23.♕xd8+ ♘xd8 24.♖xc8) 22.b4±.

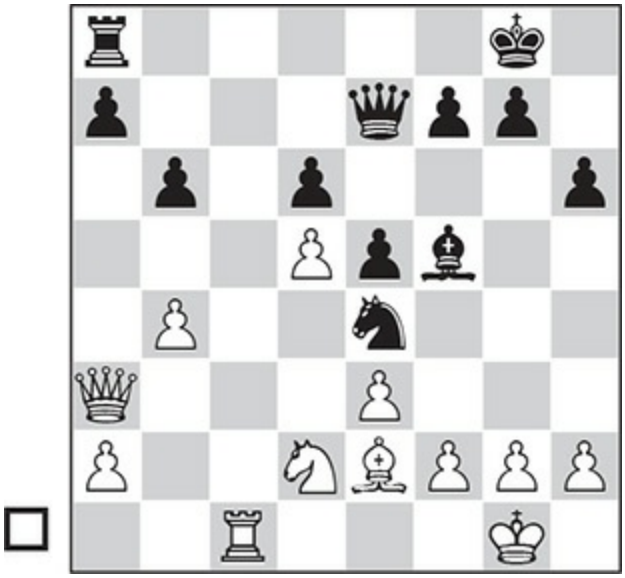
21.♕a3± ♗f5?!

21...a5? 22.b4±; 21...♗d7 22.b4 ♘a4 23.♗a6± (23.♖c7 ♕d8 24.♖c6 ♗xc6 25.dxc6 b5! 26.♗xb5 ♘b6 27.♗a6 ♕c7 28.♗b7⩲); 21...♗b7 22.b4

♘d7 23.e4±.

22.b4 ♘e4

22...♘d7 23.♖c7±; 22...♘b7 23.e4 ♗g6 24.♖c6±.



TASK 15: *Find the correct continuation for White. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

A) 23.♘xe4?! ♗xe4 24.♕b3, claiming an advantage due to the control of the c-file. But Black can put up resistance with 24...♗f5! 25.♗a6 (25.♖c6 ♗d7 26.♖c7 ♕d8=) 25...♕g5!?⇋ 26.♔f1 (26.f3 ♗h3 27.♖c2 ♗f5 28.e4 ♗g6∞) 26...♖e8 27.♖c7 (27.♖c6 e4 28.♔g1 (28.♖xd6 ♕e7 29.♖c6 ♕e5 30.♔g1 ♖d8 31.d6 ♖xd6=) 28...♕f6) 27...♖e7 and Black holds the position together;

B) 23.♕d3?! ♘g3 (23...♕h4=) 24.e4 ♘xe2+ 25.♕xe2 ♗d7 26.♕a6 ♕g5=;

C) 23.♘c4 ♖c8 24.f3 ♘f6 25.e4 ♗d7 26.♕xa7!? b5 27.a4! bxc4 28.♖xc4⩲;

D) 23.♗d3! is a very powerful move, which was missed by Black in his analysis.

23...♘xd2

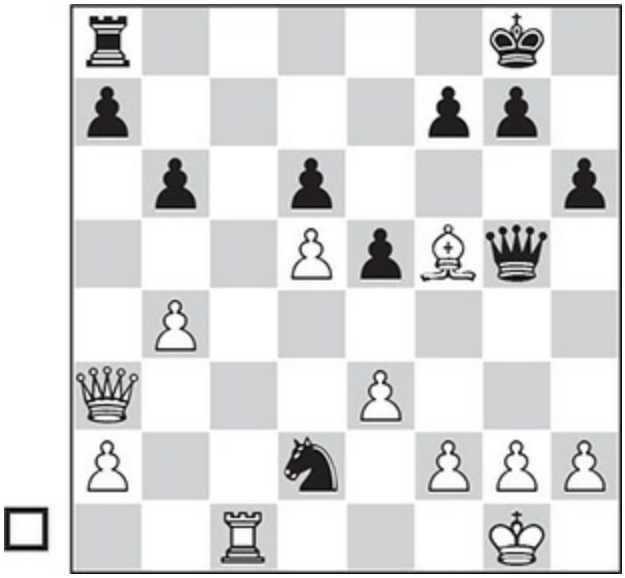
23...♕h4? 24.g3 ♕g4 25.f3+-.

24.♗xf5

The knight is stuck on d2.

24...♕g5

24...e4 25.♗c8!?±.



TASK 16: *Time to think: 2 minutes.*

25.♕xa7!

This is the point that makes 23.♗d3 work. Not 25.♕c3?? ♘f3+-+.

25...♖f8 26.♗h3?

26.♗d7 would have denied any counterplay for Black and would have won without all the drama that follows. White should be better too after 26.♕d7!? e4!?, but Black gets some activity as in the game.

26...♘f3+

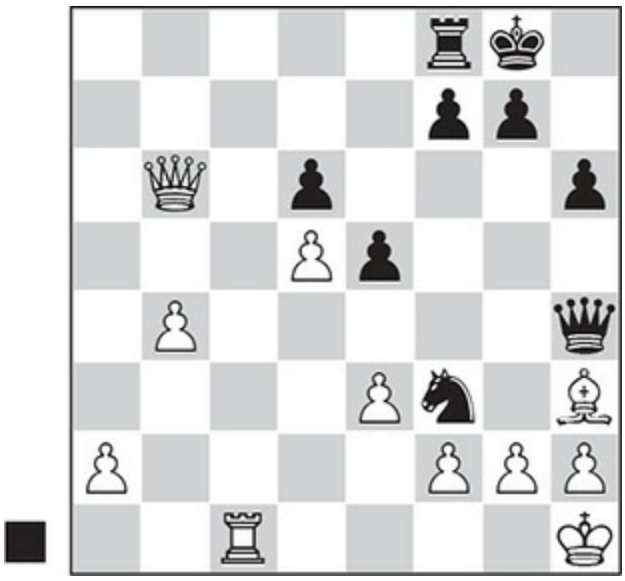
26...♕h4!⇆.

27.♔h1 ♕h4!⇆

Now Black is again in the game, but running short of time. This so often happens in many games. A player gets into a passive position, and struggles to hold the balance by investing lot of time at this stage of the game. When he actually gets counterplay, thanks to the cooperation by the opponent, he runs short of time and mistakes follow closely.

28.♕xb6

28.♕d7 ♘g5 29.♔g1 ♕xb4= 30.♗f5 g6 31.♗b1.



TASK 17: *Time to think: 3 minutes.*

28...♘g5

28...♘d2 is another way to achieve the same thing:

A) 29.f3 ♘c4! (29...♘xf3? 30.♕xd6+-) 30.♕c7 ♘xe3 31.♕xd6 ♕d4 32.♕c5 ♖d8⇋;

B) 29.♔g1 ♘e4! 30.♖f1 ♘d2= 31.♖c1 ♘e4 32.♖c2 ♕h5! (32...♘g5 33.♕xd6+-; 32...f5!) 33.f3 ♘g5 (33...♕h4? 34.♔f1!± ♘g5 35.♕xd6 ♘xh3 36.gxh3 ♕xh3+ 37.♔e1 ♕xf3 38.♕xe5+-) 34.♗g4 ♕g6 35.e4 (35.♖c1 f5). This stops 35...f5 but allows 35...♘xe4!∞ 36.♕e3 ♘g5 37.♕c1 f5.

29.♔g1

A cool and patient move. White's king gets ready to run to the other side if things get too hot on the kingside.

29...♘xh3+?

29...♘e4! 30.♖f1 ♘d2 transposes.

30.gxh3 ♕xh3?

This obvious move makes the defence more difficult as White's d-pawn becomes more dangerous.

A) 30...f5 31.♕xd6 ♖f6 32.♕xe5 ♖g6+ 33.♔f1+-;

B) 30...♕g5+ 31.♔f1 ♕f5 32.♕xd6 ♕xh3+ 33.♔e1+-;

C) 30...♕f6!± 31.a4 ♕g6+ 32.♔f1 f5 gives good counterplay for Black

on the kingside. White's pawns on the queenside require more time to become a real threat.

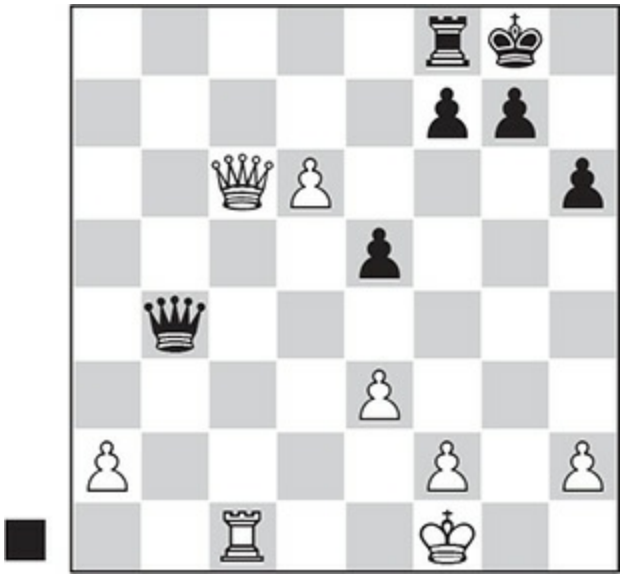
31.♕xd6 ♕g4+ 32.♔f1 ♕e4 33.♕c6?

It's White's turn to make a mistake in time trouble. 33.♕c5! was accurate and would have denied Black counter-attacking chances, e.g. 33...♖d8 34.a4! ♖xd5 35.♕c8+ ♔h7 36.♕c2+-.

33...♕xb4±

Black is again back in the game.

34.d6



TASK 18: *How should Black defend here? Time to think: 8 to 10 minutes.*

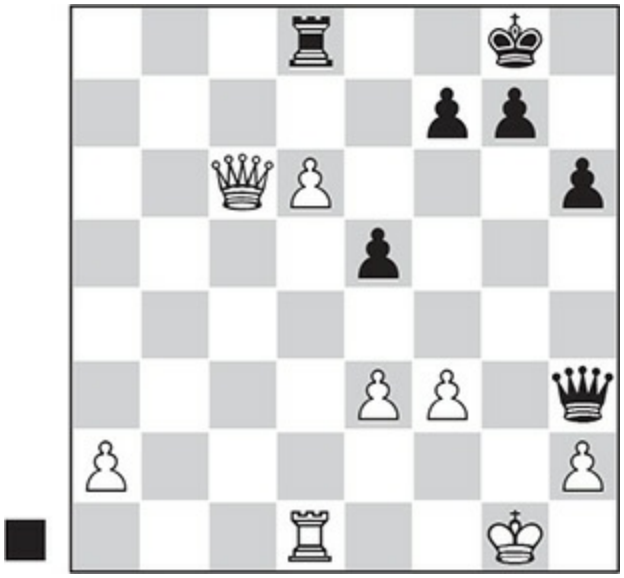
34...♕d2??

34...♖d8! 35.♖d1! ♕g4! (the weak white king ensures that Black gets sufficient counterplay) and now:

A) 36.♕d5 ♕h3+! 37.♔e1 (37.♕g2 ♕e6=) 37...♕xh2⇆;

B) 36.♔e1?! ♕g1+ 37.♔e2 ♕g4+=;

C) 36.f3! ♕h3+ (36...♕e6 37.♕d5± ♕xd5 38.♖xd5 f6 39.d7 ♔f7 40.h4 ♔e7 41.h5+-) 37.♔g1



analysis diagram

TASK 19: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

37...♔h7!!. Black first safeguards his own king before throwing his remaining pawns at the white king (37...♖c8? 38.♕xc8+! ♕xc8 39.d7 ♕d8 40.a4+-): 38.d7 (38.a4 f5! 39.d7 e4! 40.♖f1 exf3 41.♖xf3 ♕g4+ 42.♔f2 ♕h4+ 43.♔f1 ♕e7=) 38...f5 39.♖d2 ♕h4! (this is the drawback of 39.♖d2; 39...e4? can be refuted only with very accurate play: 40.♕c7 ♕h4 41.♕g3! (41.♕xd8? ♕e1+!-+) 41...♕e7 42.♕f4! (42.♕d6 ♕g5+ 43.♔f2 exf3 44.♕g3 ♕e7 45.♕f4, and we transpose to the main line) 42...exf3 43.♔f2!, threatening to remove the dangerous pawn on f3 with the king (43.♕xf3? ♕e6=): 43...g6 44.♕d6 ♕h4+ 45.♔xf3+-) 40.♔f1 ♖b8↰.
35.♕c7!

White won easily after this:
35...g6 36.d7 h5 37.♕c8 ♔h7 38.♖c4 ♕d1+ 39.♔g2 e4 40.♖c1 ♕g4+ 41.♔f1 ♕h3+ 42.♔e1 ♕xh2 43.♕xf8 ♕g1+ 44.♔e2 ♕g4+ 45.♔d2 ♕xd7+ 46.♔e1 ♕d5 47.♖c8 g5 48.♕c5 1-0

It is better to start working on our tactical skills first, and then move to calculation skills and finally to positional aspects, to master analytical skills. It is better to be good at tactical vision and calculation, rather than to learn other parts of the game at Level 1. When we become good at tactics, we also learn to think beyond the mundane understanding of material values. We learn to appreciate the importance of time, quality of pieces, king safety, risk-taking ability, etc.

What to do with the list of candidate moves?

While calculating variations, it makes sense to know the different possibilities that are available to meet our position's requirements. Then we start finding moves that can take us in those directions. Once we have identified the options, we have four possible ways to handle the multiple moves in the list:

1. The first and most logical method is to identify the most forcing continuations from among our list of moves and analyse them first. It is

always easier for upcoming players to analyse forcing moves rather than quiet moves.

2. The second method is to do a quick preliminary analysis of each of the moves we have identified in our list. We may eliminate the moves that do not work during this initial analysis, thereby narrowing our options. Alternatively, one of the moves may prove correct, and we can turn our full attention to this move and make it work.

3. The third alternative is to focus on the move we feel will work, and try to make it work by analysing it first. If it does not work, we analyse other moves in the list.

4. The fourth alternative is to identify the moves from our list that we think have fewer chances of succeeding and prove they do not work, and then eliminate them from the list. Then we turn all our attention in making the most promising move in our list work.

To reject or eliminate a move from our list, we can use the help of concrete variations or the help of logic, common sense and chess principles. The danger in this approach is that some moves will break many chess principles but still turn out to be the best move for the particular situation.

My personal preference is the following method: **we should not use only one method**; we should mix and use all or a few of these methods to reach our objective.

Suppose we intuitively feel it is possible to meet our objective in the position from the list of candidate moves. In that case, we start analysing the moves we are not sure of, eliminating them with a clear variation or using logic and narrowing down the list.

On the contrary, if we feel that the moves we have in the list will not meet our objective (for example, in a slightly better position, we are trying to increase our advantage, or in an equal position we are trying to maintain equality), it is better to focus on the move that we intuitively feel is the main line among the list, analyse it and see if it does not work. Then we can quickly eliminate the other less promising moves in our list and start making a new list of moves, or reduce our expectations of the position.

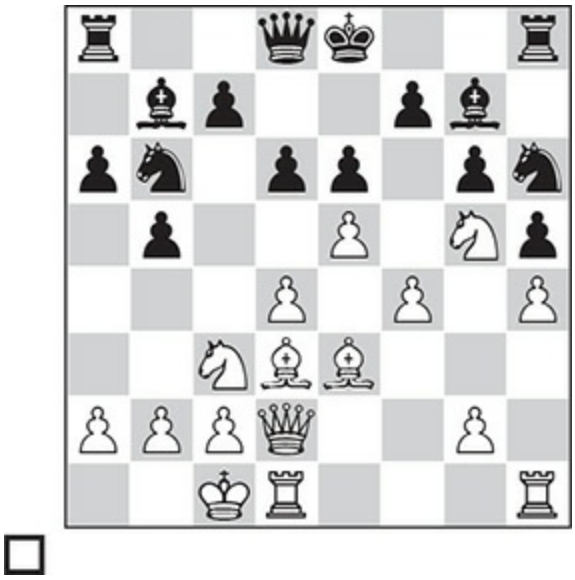
Game 55 Level 4

Surya Sekhar Ganguly	2627
Peter Svidler	2739

Ningbo 2011 (9)

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♗e3 a6 5.♕d2 ♘d7 6.0-0-0 b5 7.h4 h6 8.f4 h5 9.♘f3 ♗b7 10.♘g5! ♘h6 11.e5 ♘b6!⇆ 12.♗d3 ♕c8

At the cost of weakening the dark squares, Black can gain control over the light squares with 12...e6!?. But to play this risky move, Black has to calculate a few small lines and ensure that he does not get into trouble.



analysis diagram

TASK 1: *Calculate the consequences of 12....e6. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

A) 13.♗xg6 fxg6 14.d5!? (14.♘xe6 ♕e7 15.d5 ♘c4 16.♕e2 ♘xe3 17.♕xe3 ♘f5∞) 14...0-0 15.♗xb6 cxb6 16.♘xe6 ♕d7∞;

B) 13.♘xe6? fxe6 14.♗xg6+ ♔d7∓;

C) 13.d5!? ♘xd5 14.♗xg6!? ♘xe3 15.♘xe6 (15.♕xe3 fxg6 16.♘xe6 ♘f5∞) 15...♘xd1! (this is a very important line we need to see before playing 12...e6) 16.♘xd8 ♖xd8⩲.

13.♖hf1 ♘d5

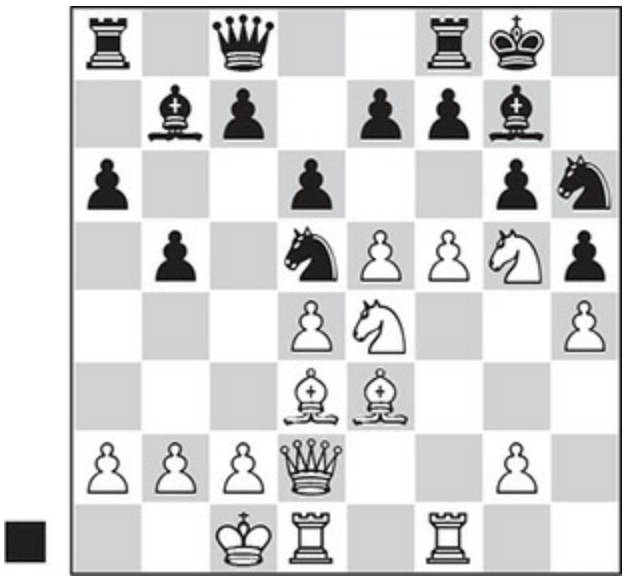
13...b4! 14.♘ce4 ♘f5 15.♗f2 a5⇆ and White will find it difficult to break

through in the centre or on the kingside.

14.♘ce4

14.♘xd5 ♗xd5 15.b3∞.

14...0-0 15.f5!



TASK 2: *Find a good way to handle the pressure. Time to think: 10 to 15 minutes.*

15...♘xf5?!

It is not at all easy to calculate the outcome of the ensuing complications until the end:

A) 15...gxf5? 16.♘g3+-;

B) 15...dxe5! 16.fxg6 f5!. The key move in this line. While training at home, it helps us immensely to expose ourselves to all kinds of dangers, teach ourselves to navigate in such situations and come out with as little damage as possible:

B1) 17.♘f7 ♘xf7 18.gxf7+ ♖xf7 19.♘g5 exd4 20.♗g1 (20.♗f4 ♖f6 21.♗e5 ♘e3∞) 20...♖f8 21.♕e2 e5! 22.♕xh5 (22.c4 dxc3 23.bxc3 ♕e8 24.♗xf5 ♖xf5 25.♖xf5 ♕c6 26.♖d3 ♘xc3∞) 22...♘f6 23.♕g6 ♕e8 24.♕xf5 ♗c8! 25.♕f2 c5∞;

B2) 17.♘c5 ♘g4! 18.♗g1 e4 (Black has managed to neutralise White's initiative with activity in the centre) 19.c4!? (19.♗e2 ♖f6∞) 19...exd3

20.cxd5 ♗xd5 21.♘xd3 ♗xa2! 22.♘f4 a5 (this also helps in bringing out the rook via a6, as well as threatening to advance the queenside pawns and create threats there) 23.♘xh5 ♗h6∞.

C) 15...f6!

analysis diagram

TASK 3: *Calculate the consequences of 15....f6!. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

16.fxg6 (16.♘e6? ♘xf5∓) 16...♘g4! 17.♘xf6+!? (an amazing resource; 17.♗g1 fxg5 18.♘xg5 dxe5 19.dxe5 ♘xe5 20.♗e4 c6 21.♗d4 ♕g4 22.♗xe5 ♗xe5 23.♗xd5+ cxd5 24.♘f7 ♖xf7∞ 25.♖xf7 ♗g7 26.♖xe7 ♕xg6 27.♕e1 ♕f6 28.c3 ♗c8 29.♖xd5 ♗f5 30.♖e8+ ♖xe8 31.♕xe8+ ♔h7 32.♔d1!⇋) 17...exf6 18.♗f5! ♘dxe3 (18...♕xf5 19.♖xf5 ♘dxe3 20.exf6 ♗xf6 21.g7 ♘xf5 22.gxf8♕+ ♖xf8 23.♘e6 ♖f7 24.♕d3 ♗xh4 25.♖f1 ♘ge3 26.♖h1 ♘g4! 27.♕b3 ♘f6∞) 19.♗xc8 ♖axc8 20.exf6 ♗xf6 21.♘h7 ♘xd1∞. Black gets sufficient compensation.

16.♖xf5! gxf5

16...♕xf5!?

A) 17.♘f6+ exf6 18.♗xf5 fxg5! (18...♘xe3 19.exf6 (19.♕xe3?! fxg5∞) 19...♘xf5 20.fxg7 ♔xg7 21.d5+-) 19.♗e4 ♘xe3 20.♗xb7 ♘xd1 21.♗xa8 ♘xb2 22.♗d5 ♘a4 23.exd6 cxd6 24.hxg5 ♘b6±;

B) 17.♘xd6! ♕g4 18.♘xb7 ♗h6 (18...♘xe3 19.♕xe3 ♗h6 20.g3+-) 19.g3 f6 20.♗f4! fxg5 21.hxg5± ♗g7 22.♗e2 ♕f5 23.♖f1±.

17.♘g3

17.♕e2?

analysis diagram

TASK 4: *Refute 17.♕e2?. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

A) 17...♗h6? 18.♕xh5 ♔g7 19.♘f6! (this is to cover the third rank, the importance of which will be apparent on the next move) 19...exf6 (19...♘xe3 20.♘g8! – when the game began, Black had a knight on this square! 20...♘g4 21.♘xe7!+-) 20.♘e6+! (when 20....♕e6 comes, it will not be defending the ♗h6, which is the point of the text move) 20...fxe6 21.♗xh6+ ♔h7 22.♗xf8+ ♔g8 23.♕g6+! (23.♗h6?! ♕e8; 23.exf6? ♕xf8 24.♕g6+ ♔h8 25.♕h5+=) 23...♔xf8 24.exf6 ♕d7 25.♖e1! (despite being a piece down, White calmly brings more units into the attack. Whenever we feel our attack is slowing down or going nowhere, it could mean that we are attacking with insufficient material in the scene of action. Bringing in pieces that have not been playing any active role in the attack into the attacking zone is a good solution in such cases) 25...♖e8 (25...♘xf6 26.♕xf6+ ♕f7 27.♖xe6+-; 25...♕f7 26.♕h6+ ♔g8 27.♖xe6 ♖f8 28.♗xf5 ♗c8 29.♗h7+ ♕xh7

30.f7+ ♕xf7 31.♖g6++-) 26.♗xf5+-;

B) 17...♘xe3? 18.♕xh5 ♖e8 19.♕xf7+ ♔h8 20.♘f6 exf6 21.exf6+-;

C) 17...fxe4! 18.♕xh5 ♕f5 19.♗xe4 ♘f4!-+. This is the key move that refutes ♕e2 on move 17, which we need to see while thinking those 5 minutes.

17...♘xe3?!

17...f4! would have forced White to play very accurately and increased the practical defensive chances for Black: 18.♗f5! (18.♗xf4? ♕g4-+) 18...fxe3 19.♕d3 ♘f4! (19...e6?? 20.♗xe6+-) 20.♕xe3 e6 21.♕xf4 (21.♗h7+!? ♔h8 22.♕xf4 f6! 23.exf6 ♖xf6 (23...♗xf6?? 24.♗g6!+-) 24.♕e3 ♕e8! 25.♗d3 e5!⇆) 21...exf5 22.♘xf5 ♕d7! (22...dxe5? 23.dxe5 ♕e8 24.♘xg7 ♔xg7 25.♕f6+ ♔g8 and now both 26.♖d3 and 26.♕f5 ♗e4 27.♘xe4 are winning for White) 23.g4! (opening the g-file for the white rook) 23...♗d5! (23...♖ae8? 24.♘xg7 ♔xg7 25.♕f6+ ♔g8 26.♕h6 f6 27.exf6+-) 24.♘xg7 (24.gxh5?? f6-+) and now:

analysis diagram

TASK 5: *How should Black try to make a fight out of it? Time to think: 3 minutes.*

24...f6! (24...♔xg7 25.♕f6+ ♔g8 26.gxh5+-) 25.♘xh5 fxg5 26.♕xg5+

♔h8! 27.♘f6 ♖xf6 28.exf6 c6 29.♖g1! (the idea is ♕f4, followed by advancing the kingside pawns; the direct 29.♕f4?! allows 29...♖e8, threatening 30...♖e4 with counter-play) 29...♕h7! (29...♖g8 30.♕f4±; here we see the usefulness of 29.♖g1) 30.h5 ♖e8 31.♕d2 ♗f3 (31...♗f7 32.b3±) 32.♖f1! ♗xg4 33.d5! (threatening 34.♕d4 and 35.f7+, winning the hanging bishop on g4) 33...c5 34.b4!±. This clears the back rank, fights for the d4-square for the queen and threatens to create another passed pawn after 35.bxc5. There are multiple threats with a single move, which is always a favourite with strong players.

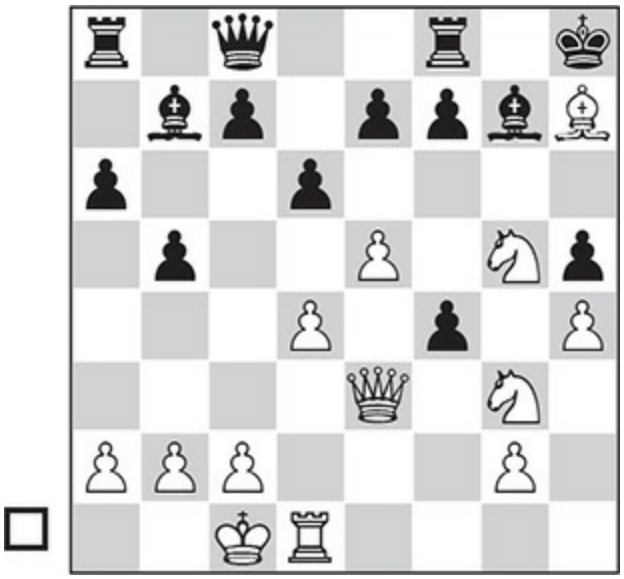
18.♕xe3 f4

18...e6? 19.♘xh5 dxe5 20.dxe5 ♗h6 21.♘f6+ ♔g7 22.g4+-.

19.♗h7+!

19.♕xf4!? ♕g4 20.♕e3! (20.♕f2? dxe5 21.dxe5 ♗xe5-+) 20...dxe5 21.dxe5±; 19.♕e2? ♕g4-+.

19...♔h8



TASK 6: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

20.♕d3! dxe5 21.dxe5

A) 21.♗g8? e4 22.♘3xe4 ♕f5 23.♗h7 ♕g4-+;

B) 21.♗f5!? ♕d8 (21...e6 22.♗xe6 e4 23.♘3xe4 fxe6 24.♘d6+-) 22.♗d7! (this does not allow ...♕e8 later when White's queen attacks the

h5-pawn; 22.♕e2 ♕d6!) 22...e4 (22...f5 23.dxe5+-) 23.♘3xe4+-.

21...f6

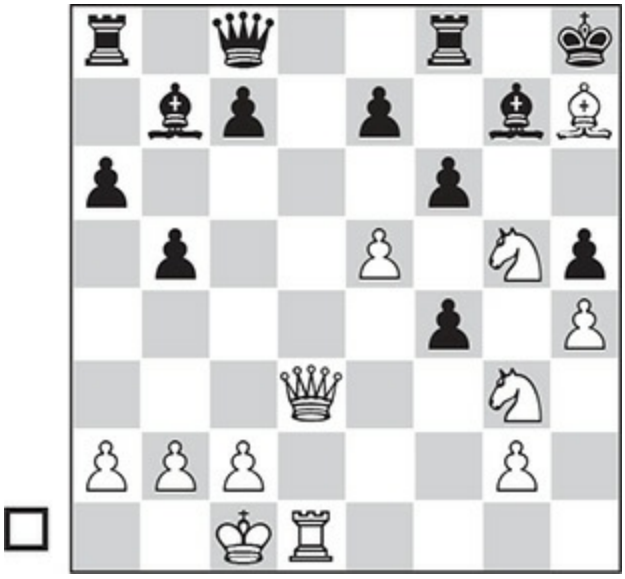
A) 21...♕d8 22.♕e2 f3 23.gxf3 ♕e8 24.♘f5! (24.f4 f6) and now:

A1) 24...♖d8 25.♖g1;

A2) 24...e6 25.f4 f6 26.♘xg7 ♔xg7 27.exf6+ ♖xf6 28.♖g1+– (28.♕e5) 28...♔h8 29.♕e5 ♕f8 30.♗g6;

A3) 24...f6 25.♘e6.

B) 21...♕g4 22.♗g8 f5 23.exf6.



TASK 7: *Time to think: 3 minutes.*

22.♗g8!

A) 22.♗f5 ♕d8 23.♗d7! (23.♕e2? ♕e8 24.♗d7 ♕g6-+) 23...fxg5 24.♕g6 ♖f7 25.♘f5! (25.♗f5? ♕g8 26.♕xh5+ ♗h6-+; 25.♕xf7? ♕g8 26.♕xh5+ ♕h7∓) 25...♕g8 26.♕xh5+ ♕h7 27.♕xf7±;

B) 22.♘xh5?! fxg5 (22...f5?? 23.♘xf4+-) 23.♕g6! (23.♘xg7? ♖d8 24.♕g6 ♖xd1+ 25.♔xd1 ♕g4+-+)

B1) 23...♖g8

analysis diagram

TASK 8: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

24.♘f6!! (this move mainly clears the h5-square for his queen; 24.♘xf4 gxf4 25.♕h5 ♕f8 26.♗g6+ ♗h6-+) 24...♗xf6 (24...exf6 25.♕h5) 25.♕h5 (25.♕h6 ♕f8 26.♕h5 ♗g7!) 25...♔g7 and now:

B11) 26.exf6+ exf6 (26...♔xf6? 27.hxg5+ ♖xg5 28.♕h6+ ♔f7 29.♕xg5 ♕e6 30.♕xf4+ *(30.♖f1 f3)* 30...♕f6 31.♕xc7 ♗xg2 32.♕g3+-) 27.hxg5 ♕e6! 28.♕h6+ ♔f7 29.♗xg8+ ♖xg8 30.♕h7+ ♔e8 31.gxf6 ♖g5! (freeing the black queen from being overloaded) 32.f7+ ♕xf7 33.♖d8+ ♔xd8 34.♕xf7 ♖xg2 35.♕xf4 ♗c6∞ and this looks like a fortress that cannot be broken;

B12) 26.hxg5! (White is not trying to win material immediately, but instead focusses on the attack) 26...♕e6 27.gxf6+ exf6 28.♗f5+-.

B2) 23...♖f7! 24.♕xf7 ♕f8 25.♕g6 g4∞.

C) 22.♕g6 ♕e8.

22...f5 23.♗e6 ♕e8

23...♕d8 24.♕e2 f3 25.gxf3 ♕e8 26.♘xf5+-.

24.♗xf5 fxg3

24...♕d8 25.♗d7+-.

25.♗e6 1-0

A nice attacking win for Surya.

One crucial factor that we need to consider every time we plan on going deeper into any position is the amount of time we have left on the clock. If our time on the clock is less, we have two options:

1. Play intuitively and quickly and hope things will turn out for the better, which is a practical approach. Here we are not trying to find the best possible move, only the most practical one that has more chances to deliver what we are hoping to achieve from the position.

2. Try to analyse as quickly and as correctly as possible if we feel this is a critical moment. Our decision can have a significant impact on the outcome of the game. The danger in this approach is that, if we cannot calculate correctly and reach a clear conclusion, we will have to go back to the initial position and try to make option two work. We will have less time to handle the problems that come up from that point onwards.

There are many resources in almost every position. We should improve our analytical ability to bring out as many of these resources hidden beyond the surface in most cases.

Unlike calculation, which is a deliberate process, an analytical process in chess is more abstract. Many factors, both internal and external, come into play and affect the quality of our analysis. Intuition, casual thinking, concentration, application of principles, knowledge of having looked at similar positions earlier and calculation skills, etc., have a significant influence.

While solving puzzles or while analysing an exciting position:

We are not just trying to find a solution to the puzzle in front of us. If that is the only objective, we do not learn and evolve much even if we find the answer. We do not make appropriate adjustments or corrections to our thinking process. It just becomes too mechanical.

While solving, we should also observe how our mind works. What we see,

what we miss, do we find good resources for our opponent, are we concentrating well, is our effort worthy, are we thinking in only one direction or are we trying to see all aspects of the position from different angles, are we curious enough to find the truth, etc.

Are we too simplistic in our approach (due to laziness, lack of ambition, poor concentration, poor analytical skills, lack of proper training, or a lack of interest in seeking the truth about the position, etc.), or are we willing to embrace the complexities of the analytical process as part of our learning and try our best to upgrade our skills to cope with them?

Let me show three fantastic examples below, through which I would like to draw attention to the fact that most innocent-looking positions hide many incredible ideas. It is usually the imagination, intent, and ability of the player concerned that impose limits on the analytical process. By analysing very complex positions, we can try to stretch that limit and reach new heights in our analytical capabilities.

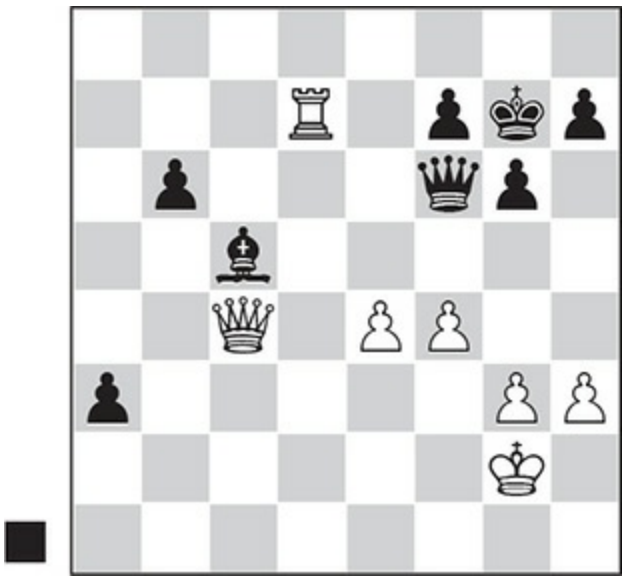
Game 56 Level 5

Boris Gelfand	2733
Alexei Shirov	2699

Odessa rapid 2007 (7)

I had seen this game in a YouTube video by Indian GM Surya Sekhar Ganguly on his channel. I watched it for a few moments and realised this was a fantastic position for training purposes. I analysed it thoroughly and have since used the position with many of my students, with good results! I thank Ganguly for permitting me to use this position in the book. The variations are simply too good!

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♘f3 c5 8.♖b1 0-0 9.♗e2 cxd4 10.cxd4 ♕a5+ 11.♗d2 ♕xa2 12.0-0 ♗g4 13.♗e3 ♘c6 14.d5 ♘a5 15.♗g5 b6 16.♗xe7 ♖fe8 17.d6 ♘c6 18.♗b5 ♘xe7 19.h3 ♗xf3 20.♕xf3 ♕e6 21.♗xe8 ♖xe8 22.dxe7 ♖xe7 23.♖fe1 ♗d4 24.♖bd1 ♕e5 25.♖d3 a5 26.♕d1 ♗c5 27.♖e2 ♖e6 28.g3 ♖d6 29.♔g2 ♖xd3 30.♕xd3 a4 31.♖d2 a3 32.♕c4 ♔g7 33.♖d7 ♕f6 34.f4



From this position onwards, try to analyse in depth as long as you can.

34...♕b2+ 35.♔f3 ♕f2+ 36.♔g4 h5+ 37.♔h4

Black has one pawn for an exchange (which is usual) in this line of the Grünfeld Defence. The king on h4 is the key to this position. White threatens to mate soon with an attack against the f7-pawn, so Black needs to resort to a quick counter-attack against White's king.

37...g5+!

37...♔h6 38.♕xf7+-.

38.fxg5

38.♔xh5 ♕f3+ 39.♔xg5 ♕xg3+ 40.♔f5 ♕g6+ 41.♔e5 ♕f6+ 42.♔d5 ♕e6#.

38...♔g6!

This cool move threatens a study-like mating pattern with 39...♕f4! 40.gxf4 ♗f2 mate. This position has become even more complex because White does not even have a check against Black's king at the moment. His choices are not obvious, and this means that there are more chances to go wrong. We should also not forget about Black's far advanced a-pawn.

38...a2? 39.♕e6!; 38...♗e3 39.♕d5.

39.♕c3?

This could have led to a brilliant refutation.

A) Not 39.e5? ♕f5 40.♕d3 ♕xd3 41.♖xd3 a2-+;

B) The correct approach was 39.♖d3! a2 and now:

B1) Trying to keep an eye on the a-pawn with 40.♕a4? does not work: 40...♗e7! 41.♖d5 (41.♕c6+ ♔h7 42.♕c3 ♕c5-+ or 42.♕h6+ ♔g8-+). Here Black has a choice between the pretty 41...♕f6!-+ and 41...♕e3-+;

B2) Counter-intuitively, the centralising move 40.♕d5!, which allows Black to queen his pawn, still saves the game: 40...a1♕ 41.♕c6+ ♗d6! 42.♖xd6+ (42.♕xd6+ f6-+) 42...♔h7 43.♕e8 ♕g7 44.♖h6+ ♕xh6 45.gxh6 ♕f6+=.

39...f6?

The winning idea was not found by Shirov. This was a rapid game and perhaps both players were short of time; 39...a2! 40.♖a7 (40.♖d8 ♕f4+! 41.gxf4 ♗f2+ 42.♕g3 ♗xg3+ 43.♔xg3 a1♕-+) and now:

A) The importance of the rook on the seventh rank is well illustrated by the variation 40...f6?! 41.gxf6 (41.♕xf6+ ♕xf6 42.gxf6 a1♕ (42...♗d4-+) 43.♖xa1 ♗e3-+):

A1) 41...a1♕?? and now:

A11) 42.♖xa1? ♗d4!-+ (42...♗e3? 43.♕e5!+-) 43.♖f1!

A111) 43...♗xf6+ 44.♕xf6+ ♕xf6+ 45.♖xf6+ ♔xf6 46.♔xh5 b5

analysis diagram

47.♔h6!= b4 48.g4 b3 49.g5+ ♔f7 50.♔h7 b2 51.g6+ ♔f6 52.g7 b1♕ 53.g8♕ ♕xe4+ 54.♔h8=;

A112) 43...♗e3? 44.♕e5! ♕xf1 45.♕e8+! ♔xf6 46.♕f8+ ♔g6 47.♕g8+!= (47.♕xf1?? ♗g5#);

A113) 43...♕xf1 44.♕xd4 b5!! (an incredible resource. Black is two pawns down in a queen and pawn endgame. But here the outside passed pawn outweighs three of White's pawns on the other side of the board. The boxed-in position of White's king on h4 and the possibility to exchange queens and transpose to a won pawn endgame tilt the game in Black's favour; 44...♕c1?? 45.♕e5 ♕c5 46.♕xc5 bxc5 47.f7 ♔xf7 48.♔g5!+-). Now:

A1131) 45.e5 ♕c4 46.♕f4

analysis diagram

46...♕a4!!-+ (a rare zugzwang! Not 46...♕xf4+ 47.gxf4 b4 48.f5+ ♔f7 49.♔g5 b3 50.e6+ ♔e8 51.f7+ ♔e7 52.f6+ ♔f8 53.♔g6+-);

A1132) 45.f7 ♕xf7 46.g4 ♕f6+! 47.♕xf6+ ♔xf6 48.gxh5 b4 49.h6 ♔g6! 50.e5 ♔xh6!-+.

A12) 42.♖g7+! ♔h6 43.♕xa1+-.

A2) 41...♗d4! 42.♖g7+! (42.♖xa2 ♕xf6#) 42...♔h6 (42...♔xf6?? 43.♕c7+-) 43.♖h7+!=.

B) 40...♗e7 41.♖xe7 a1♕ 42.♕xa1+-;

C) 40...♗d4 41.♕c6+ f6 42.♕e8#;

D) 41.♕c6+ f6 42.♕e8#;

E) 40...a1♕! (the point of sacrificing the advanced passed pawn is to decoy the opponent's rook from the important seventh rank) 41.♖xa1 f6!! (41...♗e7 42.♕c6++-) 42.gxf6 (note that White does not have 42.♖g7+ here) 42...♗d4! (42...♗e3 43.♕e5+-)

analysis diagram

43.♖f1! ♕xf1 (43...♗e3 44.♕e5=; 43...♗xf6+ 44.♕xf6+ ♕xf6+ 45.♖xf6+ ♔xf6 46.♔xh5 b5 47.♔h6!= b4 48.g4 b3 49.g5+ ♔f7 50.♔h7! b2 51.g6+ ♔f6 52.g7 b1♕ 53.g8♕=) 44.♕xd4

analysis diagram

44...b5!! transposes (44...♕xf6+?? 45.♕xf6+ ♔xf6 46.♔xh5 b5 47.♔h6!=): 45.e5 (45.f7 ♕xf7! 46.g4 ♕f6+! 47.♕xf6+ ♔xf6 48.gxh5 b4 49.h6 ♔g6!

(49...b3?? 50.e5+! ♔g6 51.e6 b2 52.e7=) 50.e5 ♔xh6 51.e6 ♔g6-+)
45...♕c4!!-+.

40.♖d5??

White returns the favour immediately with this move, again falling on the brink of defeat, and Black does not let go this time.

The right move was 40.gxf6! when after 40...♕xf6+ 41.♕xf6+ ♔xf6 42.g4 hxg4 43.hxg4 b5...

analysis diagram

... Black has two connected passed pawns, which are more advanced than White's. The fact that White is up an exchange is not going to matter that much, given these factors.

So, how can White fight against Black's queening pawns? Here, one can understand the power of the rook on an open board, especially in an endgame. It is a very agile piece and it uses its quiver full of arrows to deal with the bishop and one pawn at the very least.

Finally, it is important to note that a lone queen will not win against a rook and a knight pawn on the 4th or 5th rank. One needs a knowledge of this fortress, which is known as the Guretzky-Cornitz position. White strives to reach the drawn fortress position:

44.♖d5!. This move reminds me of the famous endgame Alekhine-

Tartakower, Vienna 1922 (White's 36th move)! 44...a2 (44...b4 45.♖xc5 b3 46.g5+ ♔e6 47.♔h5 b2 48.♖b5 a2 49.♖xb2 a1♕ 50.♖b6+ ♔f7 51.♖f6+; this is a drawn position – a fortress without the e-pawn too) 45.♖f5+! (White still requires accuracy; not 45.♖xc5?? a1♕ 46.♖xb5 ♕e1+ 47.♔h3 ♕f1+ and White loses a rook and the game) 45...♔g6 46.♖g5+ ♔f6 47.♖f5+ ♔e6 48.♖xc5! a1♕ 49.♖xb5 ♕e1+ 50.♔h5 ♕h1+ 51.♔g5 ♕xe4 52.♖f5 and as long as White does not lose the rook, he draws the game when he has a knight pawn on the fourth rank.

40...a2

A) 40...♕d4? 41.♕f3!+-;

B) 40...♗e3? 41.gxf6= ♕xf6+ 42.♕xf6+ ♔xf6 43.e5+! (43.♖d6+?? ♔e7-+) 43...♔g6 44.♖d6+ ♔f7 45.♖d7+ ♔e8 46.e6 b5 47.♖b7! ♗d4! (47...a2?? 48.♖b8+ ♔e7 49.♖a8+-) 48.♖xb5 a2 49.♖a5=.

41.♖f5

41.♖xc5 bxc5 42.♕e5! fxg5+! (42...fxe5?? stalemate) 43.♕xg5+ ♔f7 44.♕xh5+ ♔e7-+.

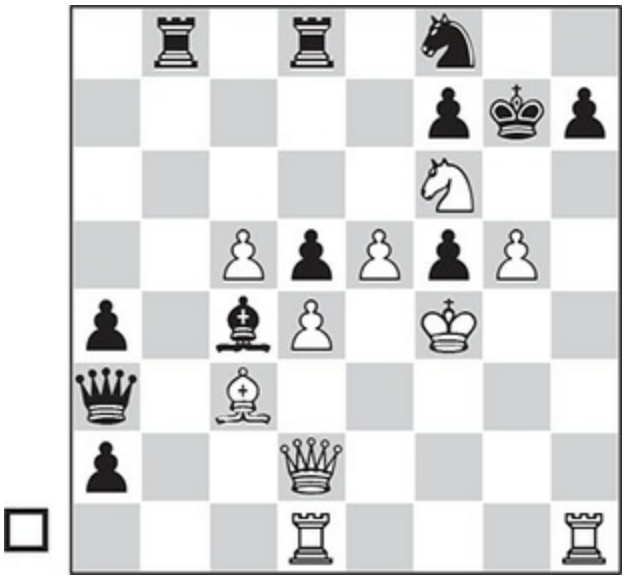
41...♕f4+!

A pretty concept that wins, although Black had an even better execution. Quicker was 41...a1♕!! 42.♕xa1 ♕f4+!!, which is another pretty way to win using the same idea.

42.gxf4 ♗f2+ 43.♕g3 ♗xg3+ 44.♔xg3 a1♕ 45.♖xf6+ ♔g7 46.e5

Now that Black's b-pawn remains, victory is decided for Black.
46.♖xb6 ♕g1+-+.
46...b5-+ 47.♔h4 b4 48.♔xh5 ♕d1+ 49.♔h4 b3 50.e6 b2 51.♖f7+ ♔g8 52.♖b7 b1♕ 53.♖xb1 ♕xb1 54.♔g4 ♕e4 0-1

Game 57 Level 5
Vasily Smyslov
Jorge Rubinetti
Palma de Mallorca 1970 (21)



TASK 1: *Time to think: 10 minutes.*

This is the first of a few positions where we will try to stretch our visualisation and calculation skills to its extreme limit! Let me explain briefly how this chapter can be approached to get maximum benefit out of this training.
I analysed this position with the Indian team in China more than a decade ago. If I am not mistaken, the players were Sasikiran, Harikrishna, Ganguly and other equally strong grandmasters. Subsequently, I had given this position to young Praggnanandhaa when he was around 10 years old, and he solved all the variations blindfolded!
Please set up the position on a physical chessboard. Have a pen and book to

write down your analysis as and when required. Use an opaque object to hide the moves in the book. Take as much time as you feel comfortable in trying to analyse the next few moves ahead and write them down if required. If you don't feel like writing the moves down, at least remember them in your mind! Whenever you feel you are losing track of the position in your head, try to start over from the beginning and slowly go to the current position in your head. Usually, the position becomes clearer when you do this.

After you have analysed the initial position until a particular point in your head, slowly move the opaque object on the book and reveal one move at a time and check the move given in the book with the move you analysed. If the moves match, keep moving ahead. If the moves do not match, we can try to make corrections in our thinking process in any of the two different ways given below:

1. Try to find out why the move given in the book is better than your move; it could be due to some tactical variation or a logical reason.
2. Try to find out if there is something wrong in your analysis or if you have missed some resources either for yourself or for your opponent.

In both cases, take some more time to think over the position again. The ability to identify the mistakes in our analysis by ourselves is quite important to make significant progress in our calculation skills.

If you have missed some move or idea in your analysis, ask yourself why you missed it. Is it because of tiredness, lack of concentration, lack of skill, lack of motivation, lack of effort or a lack of understanding of what is going on in the position? This should help us make the necessary corrections going forward in how we think in similar situations, and also help us to plan on which areas we should focus our training in the future.

For example, if you feel you have not been concentrating well while analysing the position, in the next few hours, try to focus more on concentrating better instead of worrying about getting the moves correct. We need to keep adjusting our priorities while analysing. In this way, we ideally reach a phase where our mind is calmly analysing positions and coming up with moves in a flow. The longer we can remain in this phase, the stronger we become overall in our analytical ability.

To stronger players, I strongly recommend to follow all the analysis in your head without moving the pieces on the board.
It will be good if you have someone to help you in this process. The other person just has to say if your suggested move is correct or not by referring to the book! It will be fantastic if you can find both White's and Black's moves while doing all the analysis by yourself. In this way, we teach ourselves to find the best possible moves for our opponent as well, which is very important during a tournament game.
I have worked with many grandmasters in this manner (and also with many 2200+ players) who can complete the whole game and all its analysis in their head with some help from the coach, but, more importantly, without the help of a chessboard! Give it a sincere try and reap the benefits!

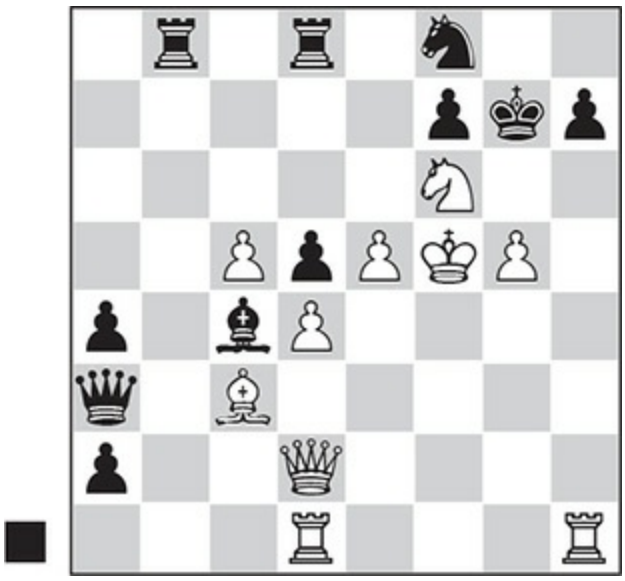
Identify the critical moves available for White in this position and analyse them all briefly. These will form the preliminary analysis. We will go deeper into each of the possibilities later on.

41.♖xh7+!?

This move is very forcing and should be one of our main lines, and it happened in the game. But before we start analysing this move, let us look at the alternatives.

Let's look at a small sideline before we move on to the main lines:

A) 41.♔xf5?!.



analysis diagram

TASK 2: *Find a good way to play against 41.♕f5. Time to think: 3 minutes.*

The dubious mark is less for the objective strength of the move, but more for the lack of ambition behind it! 41...♗a6! should be found in our analysis, and should not be missed (41...♗e2 42.♖de1 ♗a6! leads to almost the same lines as in the direct 41...♗a6 line): 42.♘h5+ ♔h8 43.♘f6 ♗c8+ 44.♔f4 ♔g7 45.♘h5+=;

B) 41.♕h2!? is another critical attempt by White to play for a win. Now Black has to take an important decision: whether to put the knight on e6 or g6, to enable his king to run to the safety of the central pawn cover:

B1) Although I have given a '?' symbol to the move 41...♘e6+?, it is simply based on the objective conclusion we get after analysing it in depth. When we start analysing a move, in most cases our initial impression could undergo changes due to the findings from the subsequent analysis. This also means that our personal bias for or against a move should not affect the quality of our analysis.

At the upcoming level, this has a huge impact on the quality of the analysis. If a player does not like a move, does not believe in a move, if it goes against their natural inclination, or they like some other move in their list better – in

all such cases, they will compromise their quality of analysis. This should be guarded against. Our aim should be to come as close to the truth as is possible given our skill level, and ideally nothing should interfere in this process.

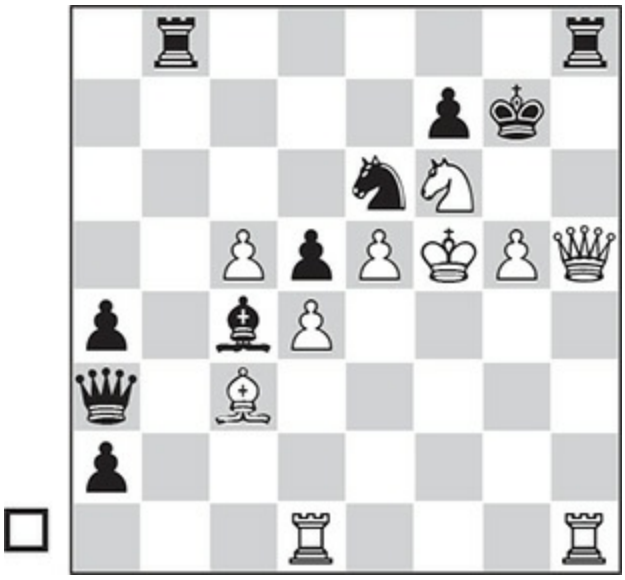
42.♔xf5 and now:

B11) 42...h5?. While we are playing a game, lots of things happen unexpectedly on the board, some of them along expected lines and others are unexpected. A few moves by our opponent could completely put us off-balance or catch us off-guard. This is principally because we are playing against another human being who has his own way of looking, interpreting and reacting to things.

As a result, in my training with the students, I prefer to include moves and variations that our minds will not even consider, dismiss completely, or which shock us. Basically, I would prefer to give a roller-coaster ride to my students in the training process, so that it will help them to keep their cool when similar things happen during a tournament under much more challenging circumstances.

43.♕xh5 and now:

B111) 43...♖h8. It is now clear that the move 42...h5? was not such a bad attempt by Black at all. There is something, but is it sufficient?



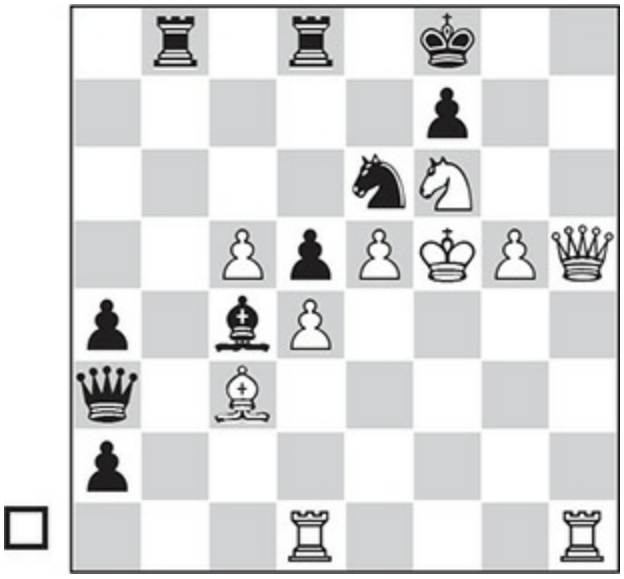
analysis diagram

TASK 3: *Find the winning continuation for White. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

B1111) 44.♘h7!? is a very clever attempt to solve the pressure along the h-file: 44...♔g8 (clearing the g7-square for the knight) 45.♔f6!? ♖f8 (45...♖b7 46.g6! – White is throwing everything at the black king, which is understandable since his own king is in the firing zone if he gives Black time! 46...fxg6 47.♕xg6+ ♘g7 48.e6! ♕xc3 49.♕f7+ ♖xf7+ 50.exf7#. This position probably deserves a diagram. However, I am just worried that the training aspect could be compromised if there are too many diagrams. I really want readers to try to analyse as much as possible without even looking at the diagrams. You should just have the initial position in mind and navigate through the labyrinth of variations. This is possible if the reader has a helper who can tell the moves from the book after the reader has analysed and given his conclusions) 46.g6!. This works even here, despite 46...fxg6+ coming with check: 47.♔xe6! (diagonal opposition! 47.♔xg6?? ♘f4+-+) 47...♖e8+ (47...gxh5 48.♖dg1+ ♔xh7 49.♖xh5#) 48.♔f6 ♖f8+ 49.♔xg6 (White calmly took the knight on e6 and comes back to take the small baby pawn on g6! Meanwhile, Black is watching all this helplessly – especially the ♕a3!) 49...♕xc3 (49...a1♕ 50.♖hg1 ♕1xc3 51.♘f6++-) 50.♖dg1, with mate shortly;

B1112) 44.♕xh8+! ♖xh8 45.♖xh8 ♔xh8 (45...♘xd4+ 46.♖xd4+-) 46.♖h1+ ♔g7 47.♖h7+ ♔f8 48.♖h8+ ♔e7 49.♖e8#. Perfect coordination among White's pieces!

B112) 43...♔f8.



analysis diagram

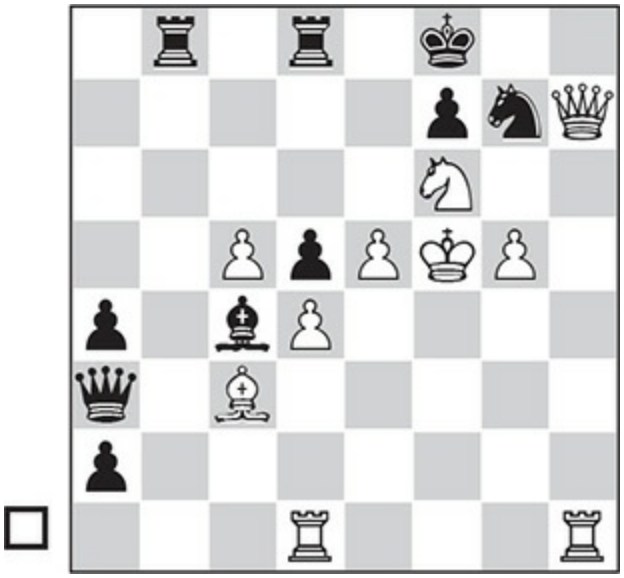
The king is running to the central pawn cover, but is he on time or just falling short?

TASK 4: *Find a pretty win for White. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

44.♕xf7+! (a pretty sacrifice; the white king plays a pivotal role in most of White's attacking schemes; 44.♕h8+?? ♔e7-+) 44...♔xf7 45.g6+ (45.♖h7+?? is an emotional move, losing to 45...♘g7+) 45...♔f8 46.♖h8+ ♔e7 47.♖h7+ ♔f8 48.♖f7#.

B12) 42...♔f8! is the best practical defence for Black: 43.♕xh7

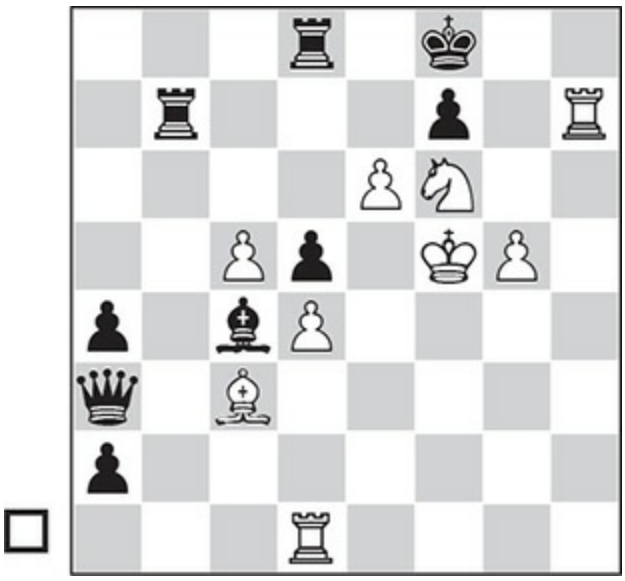
B121) After 43...♘g7+!?, should the white king back off?



analysis diagram

TASK 5: *Find the winning continuation ntil the end. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

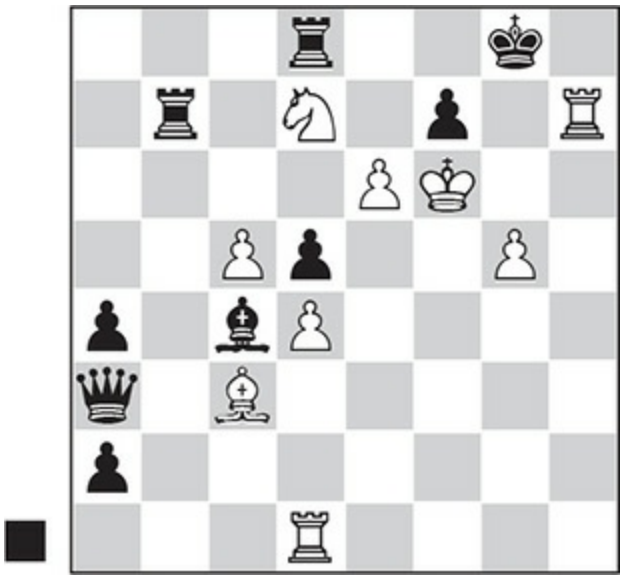
44.♕xg7+! (44.♔g4?? ♗e2+ 45.♔f4 ♕xc3-+) 44...♔xg7 45.♖h7+ ♔f8 46.e6! (this is an important move that should be found when we enter this variation with 44.♕g7; 46.g6? looks similar to 46.e6, but similar is not the same, as it usually happens: 46...♖b7! 47.gxf7! (it is White who should play accurately to obtain equality; 47.♖h8+? ♔e7 48.♖xd8 fxg6+! – oops! – not 48...♔xd8? 49.g7 ♕xc3=) 47...♕xc3 48.♖h8+ ♔xf7 49.e6+ ♔e7 50.♖h7+ ♔f8 51.♖h8+ and White should be content with a draw) 46...♖b7 (46...fxe6+ 47.♔g6!+-; a nice king walk!)



analysis diagram

TASK 6: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

B1211) 47.♘d7+?! ♔g8! (47...♖bxd7 48.♔f6! ♔g8 49.♖dh1+-; 47...♔e8 48.♔f6+-) 48.♔f6!?.



analysis diagram

TASK 7: *Find the correct moves for both sides. Time to think: 5 to 8*

minutes.

48...a1♕! is one of the main counter-attacking resources Black has at his disposal. This move keeps repeating itself in many of the variations we will be seeing: 49.♖g7+ ♔h8 50.♖xa1 ♕xa1 51.♗xa1 fxe6 (51...♖bxd7? 52.exd7 ♖xd7 53.g6!+-, the passed a-pawn is not as dangerous when compared to White's passed pawns) 52.c6 ♖b1! 53.♘e5!? (trying to create a mating net around the cornered black king) 53...♖f1+! 54.♔g6 ♖g8! (because of this move, Black survives in this variation) 55.♖xg8+ ♔xg8 56.c7 ♗a6 57.♗b2∞.

The question may arise for some: is there any point to seeing such variations? I feel it is important to expose our mind to sudden changes in the nature of the position, and to expose it to new and divergent kinds of positions with different pawn structures and piece configurations in our training. When we do this over a period of time, our mind gets used to sudden changes, expects the unexpected, and learns to be alert even without diagrams or clues!;

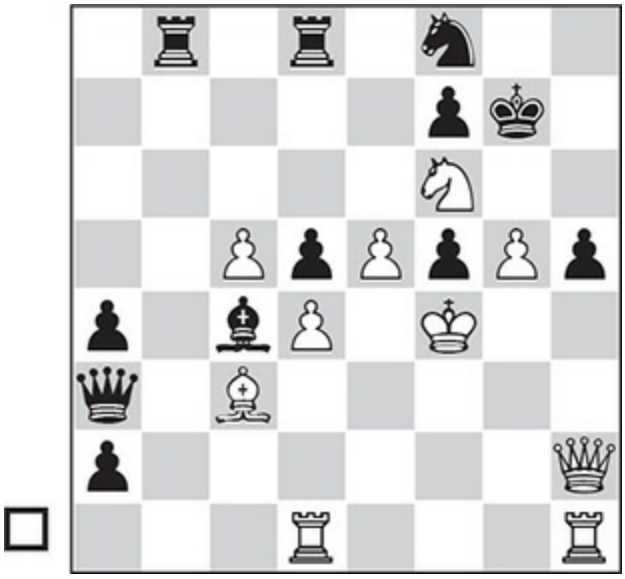
B1212) 47.e7+! (the pawn bravely gives itself up to create major problems for the black king) 47...♔xe7 (47...♖xe7 loses quickly to 48.♖h8+ ♔g7 49.♖xd8 ♗d3+ 50.♖xd3) 48.♖e1+ ♔f8 49.♖h8+ ♔g7 50.♖xd8 and White wins in multiple ways, for example 50...♗d3+ 51.♔f4 ♗h7 52.♘h5+ ♔g6 53.♖d6+ ♔xh5 54.♖h6#.

B122) 43...♘xg5?! 44.♕g8+ (44.♔xg5? ♕xc3-+) 44...♔e7 45.♕xg5+-;

B123) 43...♕xc3?! 44.♕xf7+! (we have already seen this motif earlier) 44...♔xf7 45.g6+ ♔f8 46.♖h8+ ♔e7 47.♖h7+ ♔f8 48.♖f7#;

B124) 43...♖b7 44.♕g8+! (44.♘d7+!?+-) 44...♔e7 45.♕xf7+! (by now, familiar) 45...♔xf7 46.g6+ ♔f8 47.♖h8+ ♔e7 48.♖h7+ ♔f8 49.♖xb7 ♘g7+ 50.♔g5 ♘e6+ 51.♔h6+-.

B2) 41...h5?. We are analysing this move for the sake of completeness and for its prettiness!



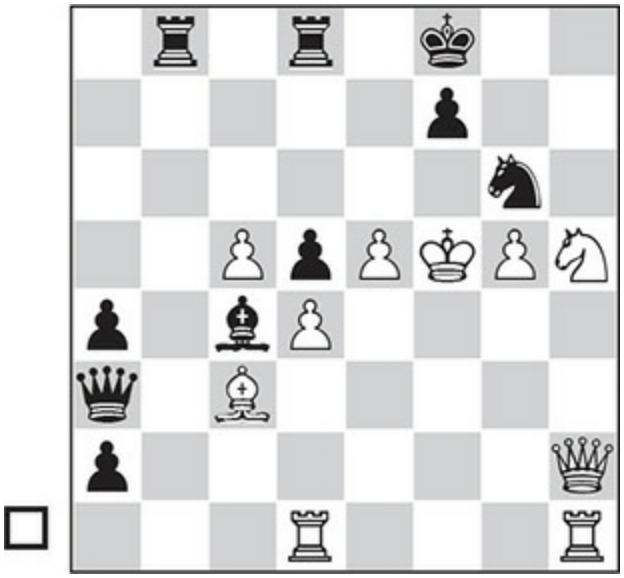
analysis diagram

TASK 8: *Find the winning continuation for White. Time to think: 3 minutes.*

42.♘xh5+ (42.♕xh5? ♘g6+ 43.♔xf5 ♘e7+ 44.♔f4 ♘g6+=; there is no safe haven for White's king) 42...♔g6 43.♘g7! (Black shouldn't be allowed to get away with ...♘e6+, getting the rooks into play) 43...♘e6+ 44.♘xe6 ♖h8 45.♕h6++-;

B3) 41...♘g6+! 42.♔xf5 and now:

B31) 42...h5? 43.♘xh5+! (43.♕xh5? ♔f8-+; White can't sacrifice on f7, unlike in lines with ...♘e6) 43...♔f8



analysis diagram

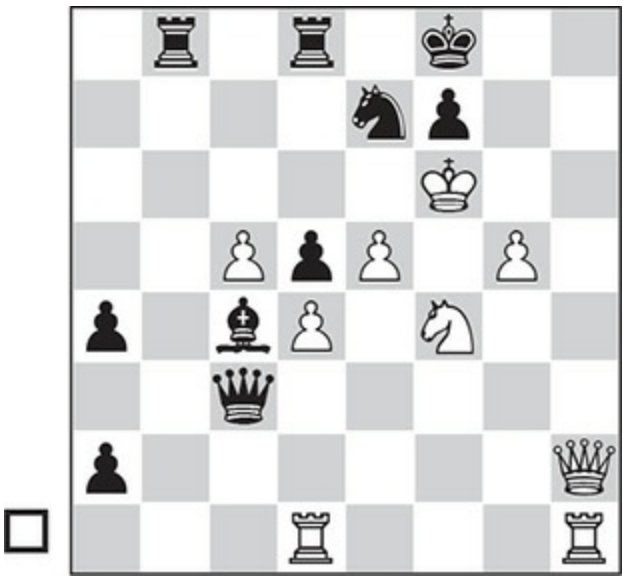
TASK 9: *Find the best continuation for White. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

44.♘f4!! is not an easy move to find, and it's even more difficult to understand the consequences for both sides. Logically, it aims to remove the main defender of the black king and open the h-file for White's major pieces to enter into the action (44.♘f6? ♕xc3-+):

B311) 44...♕xc3? and now:

B3111) 45.e6?? does not contribute anything positive in the short term: 45...a1♕-+;

B3112) 45.♔f6? is an interesting attempt to weave a mating net around Black's king using White's king! 45...♘e7! (45...♔e8? 46.e6, opening up all the lines around the black king: 46...♘f8 47.♕h8+-)



analysis diagram

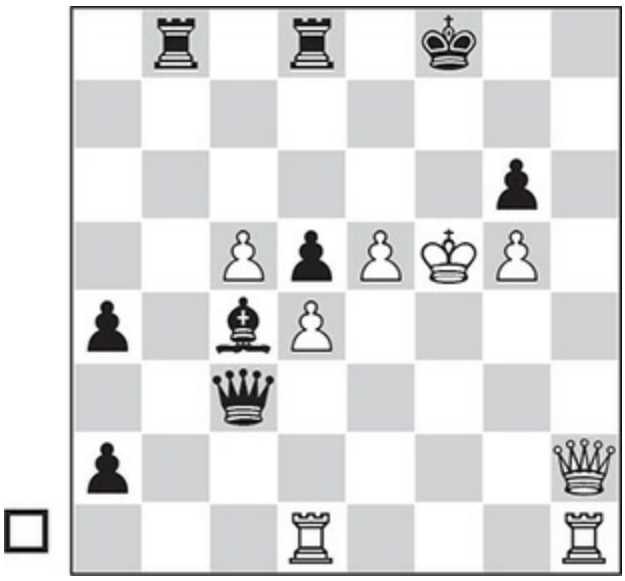
TASK 10: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

B31121) 46.♘g6+? fxg6 (46...♔e8? 47.♘xe7+-; 46...♘xg6?? 47.♕h8+!) 47.♕h6+ (47.♔e6 ♕f3!) 47...♔e8 48.♔e6 looks like an impressive winning attempt, but... 48...♕f3!-+. The black queen finally gets an opportunity to play a positive role in the proceedings. In most of this game, it was just a mute spectator. The only time it moved in the main game turned out to be a blunder eventually!;

B31122) 46.♘e6+! ♔e8! (46...fxe6? 47.♔xe6, and Black will get checkmated soon: 47...♕f3 48.♕h6+ ♔e8 49.♕h8+ ♕f8 50.♕h5+!+-) 47.♕h5! (it is White's turn to be accurate, to not find himself in a losing position if he is not careful) 47...♔d7 48.♘xd8! ♔xd8 49.♕xf7 ♕f3+ 50.♔g7 ♕xf7+ 51.♔xf7 and the position is totally unclear.

B3113) 45.♘xg6+! and now:

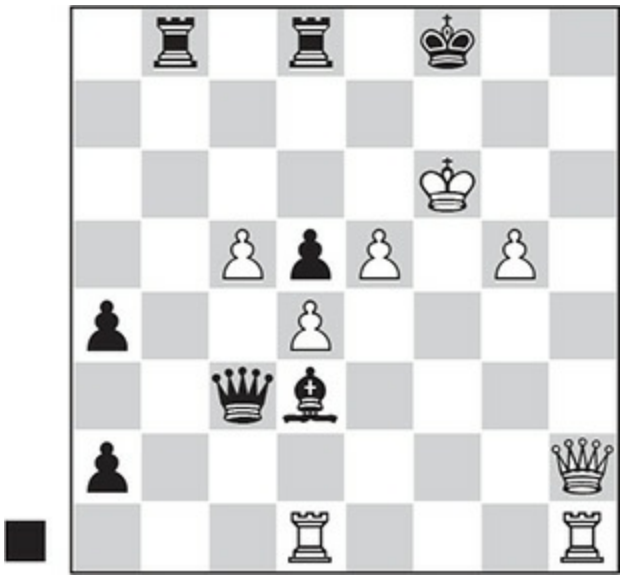
B31131) 45...fxg6+



analysis diagram

TASK 11: *See as many variations as possible and find a win for White in the process. Time to think: 10 minutes.*

B311311) 46.♔xg6? ♗d3+ 47.♔f6 is refuted in a creative manner:



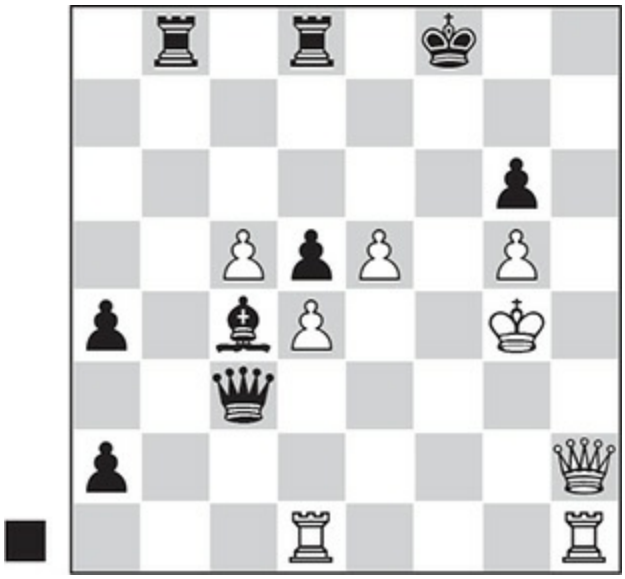
analysis diagram

TASK 12: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

47...♖b6+! (47...♗h7? 48.♕h6+ ♔e8 49.♕xh7 ♕f3+ 50.♔e6 ♕g4+ 51.♕f5+-) 48.cxb6 ♖d6+! (a nice double rook sacrifice! 48...♕c6+ 49.e6) 49.exd6 ♕xd4+ (White is unable to avoid checkmate, surprisingly) 50.♔e6 (50.♕e5 ♕f2+ 51.♔e6 ♕f7#) 50...♕g4+ (50...♕e4+ 51.♔d7 ♗b5+ 52.♔c7) 51.♔e5 (51.♔xd5 ♕e4+ 52.♔c5 ♕c4#) 51...♕e4+ 52.♔f6 ♕f5#;

B311312) 46.♔e6? can be refuted in multiple ways, for example with 46...♖e8+ 47.♔d6 ♖bd8+ 48.♔c7 ♕a5+-+;

B311313) 46.♔g4?



TASK 13*: Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

46...♗e2+! (46...♔e8? loses instructively to 47.e6! ♗e2+ 48.♕xe2 ♖b3 49.♕f2!) 47.♕xe2 a1♕! (once again this trick comes to Black's aid) 48.♕f2+ ♔g8! (48...♔e8? 49.e6+-). Now it is White who has to force a draw with 49.♖h8+! (49.♖xa1? ♖f8-+) 49...♔xh8 50.♕f6+ ♔g8 51.♕xg6+=;

B311314) 46.♔f6? ♕f3+-+;

B311315) 46.♔f4! is the only move that wins for White! Let's see: 46...♔e8 47.e6!

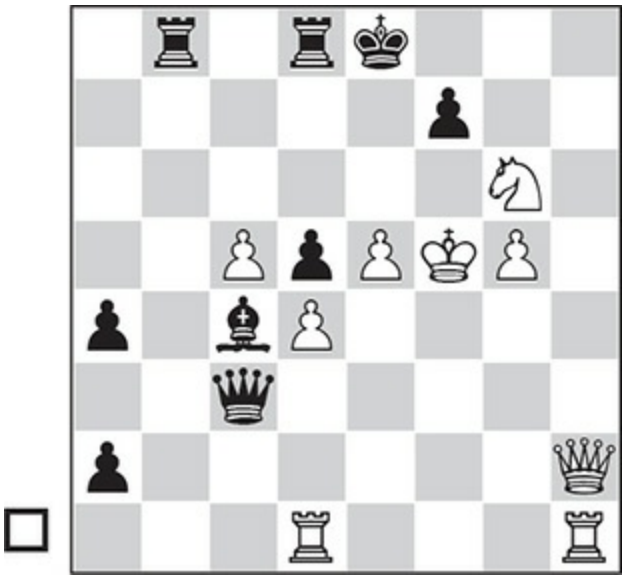
B3113151) 47.♕h8+? ♔d7 48.♕f6 (48.♖h7+ ♔c8-+) 48...♗b5!

49.♖h7+ ♔c8-+;

B3113152) 47.♕h7? ♕c2! 48.♕g8+ ♔d7-+;

B3113153) 47.c6!, preventing the black king from running away, also works: 47...♕a3 48.♕h8+ ♕f8+ 49.♕f6!+- (49.♕xf8+? ♔xf8 50.c7 ♔e7=); 47...♔e7 48.♕h7+ ♔xe6 49.♕xg6++-.

B31132) 45...♔e8!



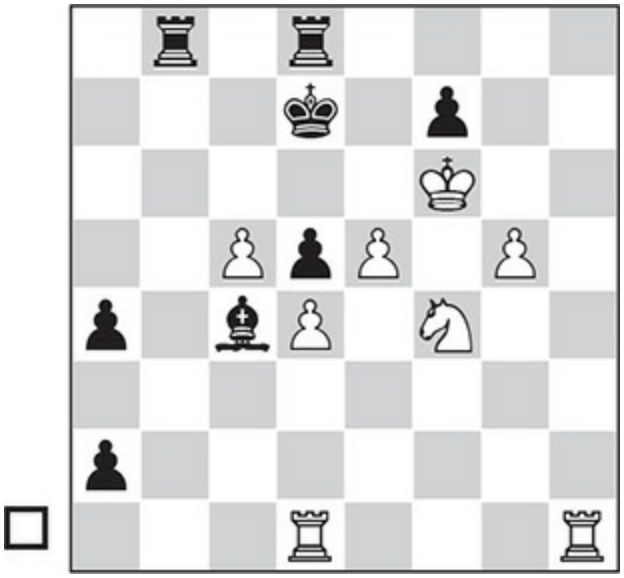
TASK 14: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

B311321) 46.e6? (White's king is too exposed to go for this) 46...♕f3+ 47.♘f4 fxe6+ 48.♔f6 (48.♔xe6 ♕e4+ 49.♔f6 ♖b6+ 50.cxb6 ♖d6+) 48...♔d7!-+;

B311322) 46.♘f4? ♔d7-+, Black's king escapes the danger zone;

B311323) 46.c6?, trying to prevent the black king from running to the queenside, does not work either, due to 46...♕f3+ 47.♘f4 ♔e7, and with ...♕e4 to come, Black wins;

B311324) 46.♔f6! ♕f3+ (46...♔d7? 47.e6++-) 47.♕f4! (by a process of elimination, we can find this move: 47.♘f4? ♔d7-+; 47.♔g7? fxg6 48.e6 a1♕-+. Such unexpected changes in the character of the position – from a complex middlegame position to an endgame – are not easy to handle during tournament play – 47...♕xf4+ 48.♘xf4 ♔d7



analysis diagram

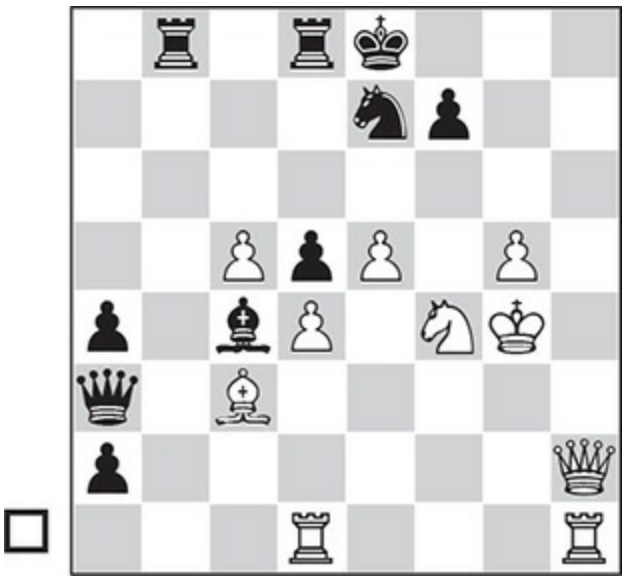
TASK 15: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

B3113241) 49.e6+? fxe6 50.♖h7+ (50.♘xe6? ♖g8!∓) 50...♔c6 51.♘g6! ♔b5 52.♘e5=;

B3113242) 49.g6!. Despite the queen trade, White manages to keep the initiative going. He creates a dangerous and advanced passed e-pawn and keeps the black rooks occupied: 49...fxg6 50.e6+ ♔c7 (50...♔c6 51.♘xg6 ♖e8 52.e7 ♔b5 53.♔f7 ♔b4 54.♘e5+-) 51.e7 ♖e8 52.♔f7! (an important resource for White, which ties the black rooks up completely) 52...♔d7 (52...g5 53.♘e6+ ♔d7 54.♘f8+ ♔c7 55.♘h7 ♗d3 56.♖xd3 ♖b1 57.♖dd1+-) 53.♘xg6+-.

Back to the position after 44.♘f4!!:

B312) 44...♘e7+? 45.♔g4 ♔e8 (45...♕xc3 46.♕h8+ ♘g8 loses in multiple ways, e.g. 47.♖h7 ♔e7 48.♖xf7+! or 47.♘g6+ fxg6 48.♖df1+ ♔e8 49.e6!, keeping the d4-pawn defended and blocking the black king's escape route) and now:



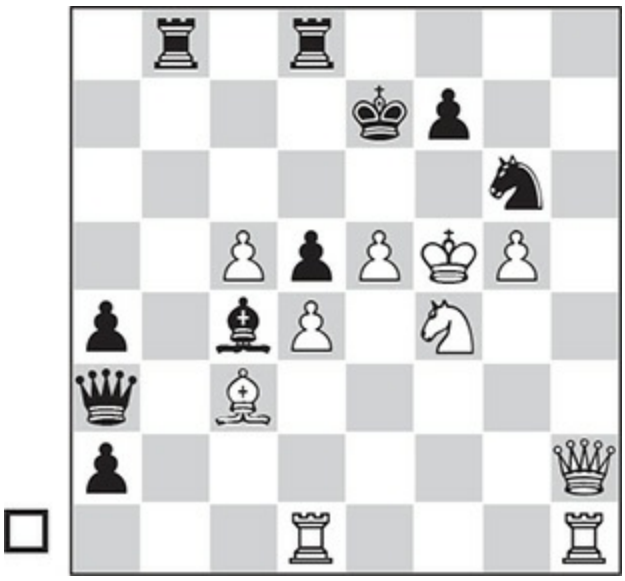
analysis diagram

TASK 16: *Time to think: 3 minutes.*

46.e6! fxe6 47.♘xe6 (White's pieces combine very well; 47.♕h8+ ♔d7 48.♕e5! ♕xc3 49.♕xe6+ ♔c7 50.♖h7! ♖d7 51.♖xe7 ♖xe7 52.♕xe7+ ♔c6 53.♕d6+ ♔b7 54.♕d7+ ♔a6 55.♕c6+ ♔a7 56.♕xa4+ ♗a6 57.♕xa2 and White's extra pawns and better coordinated pieces ensure the win) 47...♕xc3 48.♕e5+-;

B313) 44...a1♕? 45.♘xg6+ ♔e8 (after 45...fxg6+, here 46.♔f6 works, due to 46...♖b6+ 47.e6! ♖xe6+ 48.♔xe6 ♖e8+ 49.♔f6 and Black runs out of checks and loses) 46.e6! (in this instance, White has the time to indulge in this luxury, as both black queens are far from the scene of action) 46...fxe6+ 47.♔xe6 ♖b6+ (this would work with White's king on f6, as he can follow it up with ...♖d6, but here it does not work) 48.cxb6 ♕d6+ 49.♕xd6 ♖xd6+ 50.♔xd6 ♕xc3 51.♔e6!? (weaving a mating net around Black's king) 51...♕e3+ 52.♘e5+-;

B314) 44...♔e7!. It is important for Black to run with the king to safety before it is too late.



analysis diagram

TASK 17: *Time to think: 3 minutes.*

45.e6! (clearing the h2-b8 diagonal for the white queen; 45.♘xg6+? fxg6+ 46.♔g4 ♖h8 47.♕f2 ♖bf8-+)

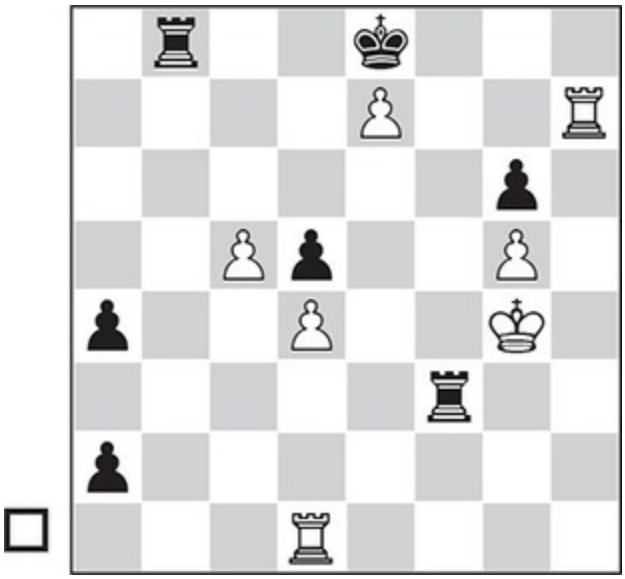
B3141) 45...♕xc3?! and now:

B31411) 46.exf7? is refuted beautifully by 46...♘h4+! 47.♕xh4 ♕c2+ 48.♔g4 ♗e2+ 49.♔g3 ♖b3+;

B31412) 46.♖he1? a1♕! (this indirectly attacks the ♖e1) 47.exf7+ (47.♖xa1 ♗d3+ 48.♔g4 ♕xd4! 49.exf7+ ♔xf7 50.♕h7+ ♔f8 51.♕h6+ ♔g8!-+) 47...♕xe1 48.♖xe1+ ♕xe1 49.♘xg6+ ♔xf7. White has many possibilities to give multiple checks, but Black manages to eventually find a way to escape from all the checks and win. Upcoming players should learn this skill of running out of checks, which will be quite useful at times: 50.♕h7+ (50.♕c7+ ♔e8 51.♔f6 ♕f2+ 52.♔e6 (52.♘f4 ♕xd4+-+) 52...♕e3+ 53.♘e5 ♕h3+ 54.♔f6 ♕h8+ 55.♔e6 ♕g8+ 56.♔f6 ♕f8+ 57.♘f7 (57.♔e6 ♗b5-+) 57...♖dc8 58.♕e5+ ♔d7 59.♕e6+ ♔c7-+) 50...♔e8 51.♕g8+ ♔d7 52.♕f7+ ♔c6-+;

B31413) 46.♘xg6+! fxg6+ 47.♔g4! ♗e2+! 48.♕xe2 ♖f8 (48...a1♕ 49.♕e5!+-) 49.♖h7+ ♔e8 50.e7! (50.♕e5? ♕f3+) 50...♕f3+!? (this

variation is given for its beauty) 51.♕xf3 ♖xf3



analysis diagram

TASK 18: *White has two different ways to win in this position. For the sake of training and its beauty, calculate both continuations until the end. Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

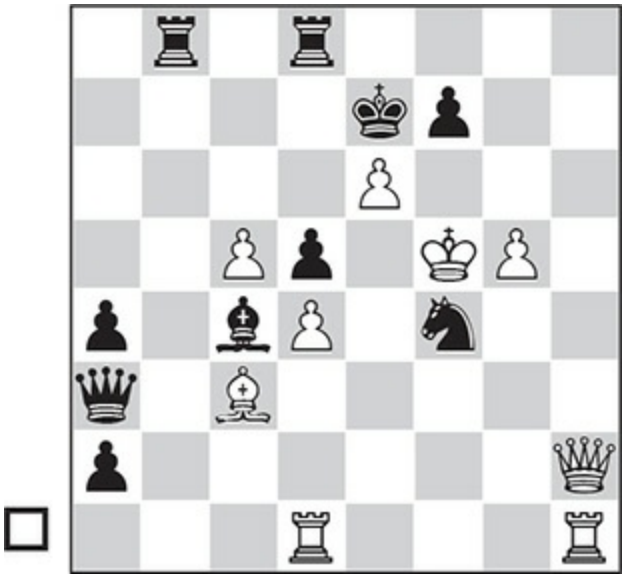
B314131) 52.♔xf3 ♖b1 (52...♖b3+ 53.♔f4 ♖b1 54.♖dh1! (54.♔e5!? ♖xd1 (54...a1♕ 55.♔e6+-) 55.♔d6 ♖e1 56.♖h8+ ♔f7 57.♖f8+ ♔g7 58.e8♕ ♖xe8 59.♖f1!+-) 54...a1♕ 55.♖h8+ ♔xe7 56.♖1h7+ ♔e6 57.♖e8#) 53.♖dh1! (wonderful coordination among White's pieces to deliver mate in the middle of the board) 53...a1♕ 54.♖h8+ ♔xe7 55.♖1h7+ ♔e6 56.♖e8+ ♔f5 57.♖e5#;

B314132) 52.♖h8+ ♔xe7 53.♖xb8 (53.♖e1+ ♖e3 54.♖xe3+ ♔d7 55.♖h7+ ♔c6 56.♖e6+ ♔b5 57.♖h1+-) 53...♖b3 54.♖b6!+-. A nice opposition with rooks!

B3142) 45...a1♕?! 46.♘xg6+!? fxg6+ 47.♔e5! ♖h8 48.♕f4 ♖bf8 (48...♖hf8 49.♖h7+ (49.♕f6+? ♖xf6 50.gxf6+ ♔d8-+; unfortunately, White is not able to create a mating attack around Black's king) 49...♔e8 50.♖h8!?+-) 49.♕f6+! ♖xf6 50.gxf6+ ♔d8 51.♖xh8+ (51.♔d6!? is another creative way to win: 51...♖xh1 (51...♖e8 52.e7+ ♔c8 53.f7+-)

52.f7!+-) 51...♔c7 52.♖h7+ ♔c6 53.e7 ♔d7 54.♖h8+-;

B3143) 45...♘xf4! is the best practical defence for Black.



analysis diagram

TASK 19: *Calculate the interesting options available to White. Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

B31431) 46.♕xf4? looks interesting, but Black manages to successfully beat off the attack: 46...fxe6+ 47.♔e5 (47.♔g4 ♗e2+) 47...♔d7! (47...♖f8?? 48.♖h7+ ♔e8 49.♕xf8+! ♔xf8 50.♔f6 ♔e8 51.♖e7+ ♔d8 52.♖h1+-) 48.♕f7+ ♔c6 49.♕xe6+ ♔b5-+;

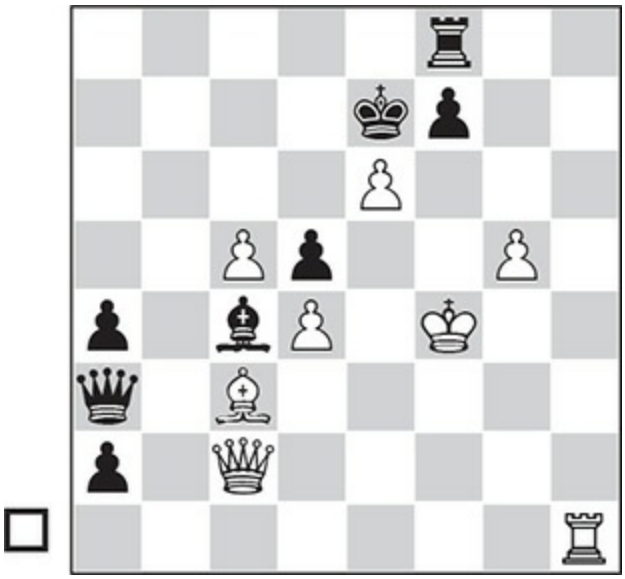
B31432) 46.♔xf4! and now:

B314321) 46...♕xc3?? 47.♕h6!+-;

B314322) 46...♖f8? 47.♔g4!, clearing the diagonal for the white queen and getting the king out of possible discovered checks along the f-file (47.♔e5?? ♕xc3-+);

B314323) 46...♖h8 47.♕c2! (an amazing move that is not at all easy to find, especially if you try to analyse this position from the initial position without moving the pieces; the queen can enter the game via f5 in the near future; 47.♕f2? fxe6-+; 47.♕g3?! ♖xh1 48.♖xh1 ♖b1!=) 47...♖xh1 (47...♖bf8 48.♖xh8 ♖xh8 49.♕f5+- brings out the main idea behind

47.♕c2) 48.♖xh1 ♖f8



analysis diagram

TASK 20: *Time to think: 3 minutes.*

B3143231) 49.♔g4!. Such non-forcing moves are not easy to find while analysing. It gets the king out of discovered checks and also gets ready to play ♕f5 without getting into a pin. 49...fxe6. From this point onwards, it is a series of forcing moves, consisting mostly of checks and eventually leading to a mate. Try to calculate the whole variation until the checkmate:

B3143231a) 49...a1♕ 50.♖xa1 ♕b3 51.♕h2+-;

B3143231b) 49...♕b3 50.♕f2 (50.♕h2 ♕b8 51.♕f2 fxe6 52.♖h7+ ♔e8 53.♕xf8+!+-; a nice trick!) 50...fxe6 51.♖h7+ ♔e8 52.♕e1!+- (this is an important move we need to find while considering our 50th move; 52.♕e3?? ♕d1+!∓); 50.♖h7+ ♖f7 (50...♔d8 51.♕h2!, and mate is inevitable) 51.♖xf7+! (51.g6 is another less forcing way to conclude the game in White's favour) 51...♔xf7 52.♕h7+ ♔e8 53.♕g6+ ♔e7 54.♕f6+ ♔d7 55.♕f7+ ♔c6 56.♕xe6+ ♔b7 57.c6+ ♔b6 58.c7+! (clearing a path for the queen and bishop to combine and deliver mate. It is very useful to know in what situations two pieces combine well and can deliver mate. If we have prior knowledge of such mating combinations, it will make our job

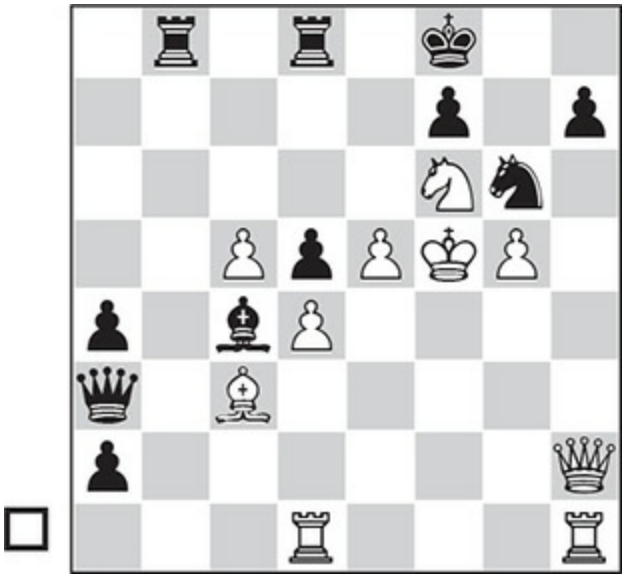
easier while analysing such positions) 58...♔xc7 59.♗a5+ ♔b7 60.♕b6+ ♔a8 61.♕c6+ ♔b8 (61...♔a7 62.♗b6+ ♔a6 63.♗c5+ ♔a5 64.♕b6#) 62.♗c7+, and it's checkmate soon;

B3143232) 49.♔e5!? also wins in an exciting manner: 49...♕b3! 50.♕xb3 (50.♕f5?? ♕b8#) 50...axb3 51.c6! (opening the a3-f8 diagonal for the ♗c3) 51...♖g8 52.♗b4+ ♔e8 53.c7 ♗a6 54.♖h7 ♖xg5+ 55.♔f4 (55.♔d6?? fxe6-+) 55...fxe6 56.♖e7+ ♔f8 57.♔xg5! a1♕ 58.c8♕+ ♗xc8 59.♖a7++-.

While training, it makes a lot of sense to expose ourselves to a wide variety of tactical themes, pawn structures, the different ways pieces coordinate with each other, different defensive mechanisms, etc. The training should teach us to keep our alertness at an optimum level, and make our mind work efficiently to get the desired outcome. The longer our mind is made to work in an efficient manner, the more it will adapt to be in that phase or go into it when required. In that sense, no variation is unimportant if it forces us to think in all kinds of ways: to be imaginative, to apply principles, to dig out an idea or concept from our memory, or to come up with our own creative solution to the problem we are facing.

B32) 42...♘e7+? 43.♔g4! (White is trying to get away from the checks) 43...♗e2+!? 44.♕xe2 ♕xc3 45.♖xh7+ ♔f8 (45...♔g6 46.♕h2+-) 46.e6!? (a pawn break and a forcing move!) 46...fxe6 47.♕xe6+-;

B33) 42...♔f8! is the critical defensive move for Black.



analysis diagram

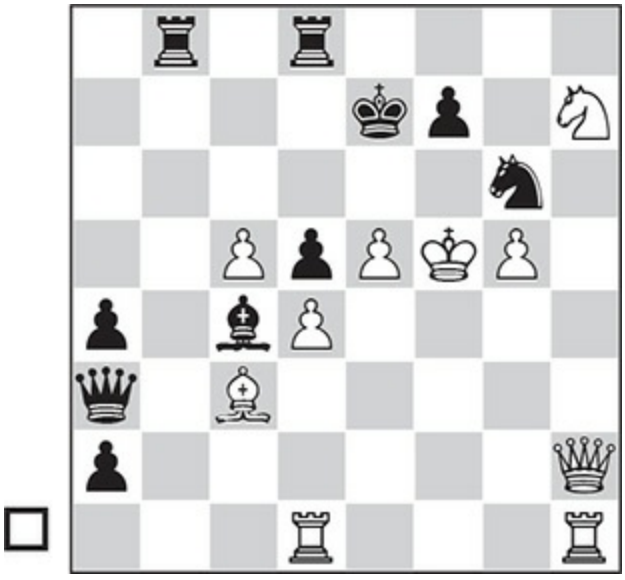
TASK 21: *Time to think: 5 minutes. Analyse the moves 43.e6 and 43.♘xh7+ and come to a conclusion.*

B331) 43.e6!? ♕xc3 44.♘xh7+! ♔g8 (44...♔e7?? 45.♕c7++-) 45.♘f6+ ♔f8=;

B332) 43.♘xh7+!? and now:

B3321) 43...♔g7?? 44.♕h6+ ♔g8 45.♘f6#;

B3322) 43...♔e7?



analysis diagram

TASK 22: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

44.e6! is by now a familiar trick by White, aiming to open up the h2– b8 diagonal for the white queen:

B33221) 44...fxe6+?! 45.♕xg6 ♖g8+ 46.♕h6+-;

B33222) 44...♘h4+?! is an interesting counter-attacking idea for Black but if White plays accurately, no damage is done:

B332221) 45.♕xh4? is too greedy and throws away all the advantage for White: 45...fxe6+ 46.♕g6 ♕xc3! 47.♘f6 ♕c2+ (47...♗d3+? 48.♕g7 ♖f8 49.g6!+-, followed by discovered checks; 47...♖g8+? 48.♘xg8+ ♖xg8+ 49.♕h7+-) 48.♕g7 ♖g8+!? 49.♘xg8+ ♖xg8+ 50.♕xg8 ♕g6+ 51.♕h8 ♕e8+ 52.♕h7 ♕f7+ 53.♕h6 ♕f8+ leads to a forced draw; 54.♕h5?? ♗e2+-+;

B332222) 45.♕g4! is a cool move, ensuring White's king will be safe. White can calmly focus on his own attack: 45...♖b7 46.exf7 and Black's king gets hunted (46.♕e5 also wins).

B33223) 44...♖b7 45.exf7! ♕xf7 (45...♕xc3 46.♕xg6! ♗d3+ 47.♕g7 ♕xd4+ 48.♘f6+-) 46.♘f6+-. Here, 46.♕h5!? ♖g8 47.♕f3!+- is another glamorous option available to White; but not 47.♘f6? ♕xc3 48.♕h7+ ♖g7-+.

B3323) 43...♕g8?? 44.♕h6+-;

B3324) 43...♕e8! is an easy variation to find: 44.♘f6+ (44.e6!? ♕xc3! 45.♘f6+ ♕f8! 46.♘h7+ and White has nothing more than perpetual check) 44...♕f8!=.

B333) 43.♕xh7?? ♕xc3 with Black getting a mating attack now!

41...♘xh7

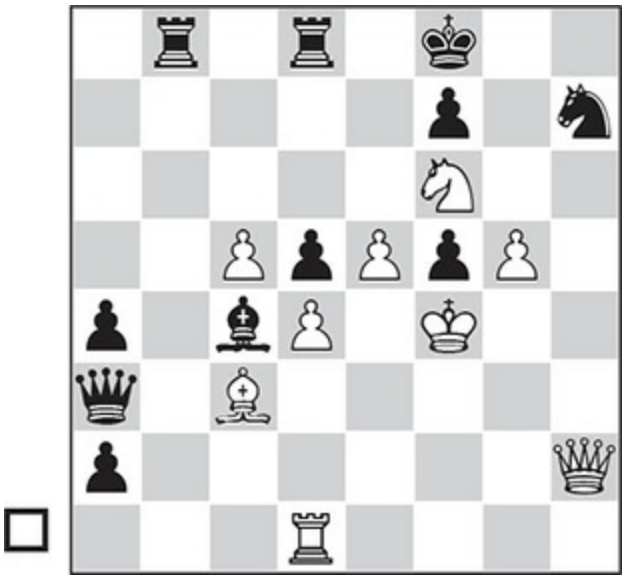
41...♕g6?? loses in multiple ways. In such situations, it is better to find one clean way to win and move on in the training: 42.♖dh1 (42.♕h2?? is the only blunder in the position, due to 42...♘e6+ 43.♕g3 ♕xc3+-+) 42...♘e6+ (42...♘xh7 43.♕h2+-) 43.♕g3! (43.♕e3? ♕xc3+ 44.♕xc3 ♖b3 and White will be forced to take perpetual check and a draw; 43.♕f3? ends in the

same manner) 43...♕xc3+ 44.♕xc3 ♖b3 45.♖1h6+ ♔xg5 46.♖h5+ ♔g6 and now 47.♔h4! is the point of 43.♔g3!, forcing mate on the next move.

42.♕h2 ♘xg5!

The best defence. Whenever our opponent has sacrificed material for an attack against our king, we should always consider giving back (some of) the extra material to keep our king safe or to reduce the severity of the opponent's attack. Usually, at the lower level, players try to defend by keeping the extra material safe while defending the king that is under a powerful attack. As a result, they get into big trouble.

42...♔f8?



analysis diagram

TASK 23: *Refute 42...♔f8?. Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

A) 43.♘xh7+? (one of the common mistakes we make in calculation is that we often get attracted to a gain of material in the middle of a strong attack on the opponent's king. It is better to ignore the gain of material and focus our effort on ending our attack in a checkmate or a huge gain of material) 43...♔e7 44.♕h6 and now 44...a1♕! is an important defensive resource for Black: 45.♖xa1 (45.♗xa1 ♖b3 46.♕f6+ ♔e8 47.♕c6+=) 45...♕xc3 46.♕f6+ ♔e8 47.♕c6+. Black has sufficient counterplay, so

White should be happy with a draw;

B) 43.♕xh7? a1♕! 44.♗xa1 ♕a2 45.♕h6+ ♔e7 46.♘g8+! ♔e8! 47.♘f6+=;

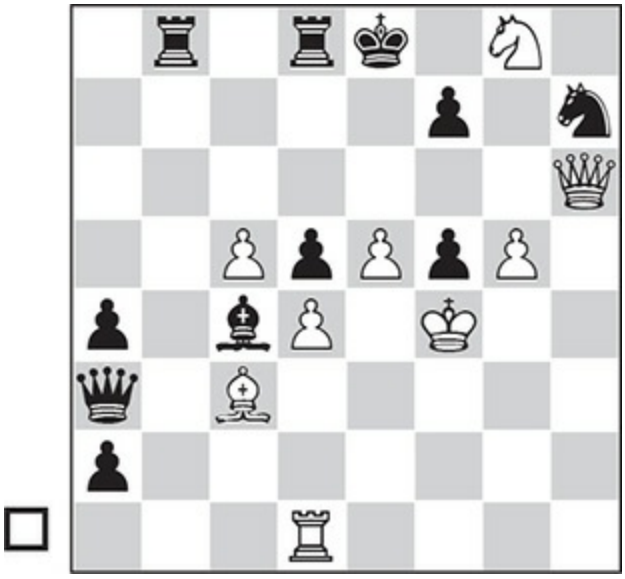
There are two ways to win here:

C) 43.♕h6+! ♔e7 44.♘g8+! (this is the main idea behind 43.♕h6; 44.e6?? a1♕-+; 44.g6?? a1♕-+)

C1) 44...♖xg8?! 45.♕d6+ ♔e8 46.♕xb8+ ♔e7 (46...♔d7 47.♕d6+ ♔c8 (47...♔e8 48.♗a5) 48.♗a5! leads to a pretty mate: 48...♔b7 49.♕d7+ ♔a8 50.♕c6+ ♔b8 51.♗c7+ ♔a7 52.♗b6+ ♔a6 53.♗d8+ ♔a7 54.♕c7+ ♔a8 55.♕c8+ ♔a7 56.♗b6#) 47.♕d6+ ♔e8 48.♗a5!+-. The bishop makes a grand entry!;

C2) 44...♔d7? 45.♕d6+ ♔c8 46.♕c6#;

C3) 44...♔e8 is now toughest:



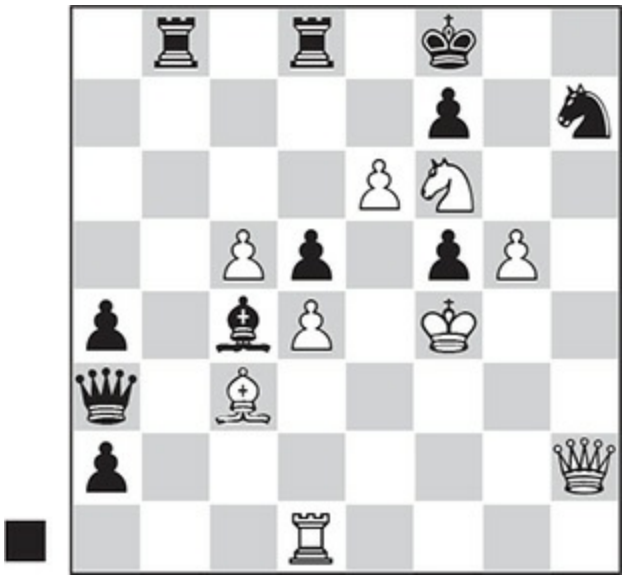
analysis diagram

TASK 25: *Find the correct continuation for White. Time to think: 3 minutes.*

C31) 45.e6? a1♕! (now the rook on d1 will not be able to operate freely on the first rank. 45...♕xc3?? is too greedy! 46.exf7+ ♔xf7 47.♕xh7+ ♔f8 48.g6+-) 46.exf7+ ♔xf7 47.♕xh7+ (47.g6+ ♔e8-+) 47...♔f8 48.♕e7+ (48.g6?? ♕1c1+-+) 48...♔xg8 49.♕e6+ ends in a draw;

C32) 45.g6! is the most accurate. Here, the defensive idea 45...a1♕ (45...♘f8 46.gxf7+ ♔xf7 47.♕f6+; 45...♕xc3 46.gxf7+ ♔xf7 47.♕xh7+ ♔f8 48.♕e7+ ♔xg8 49.♖g1+) does not work: 46.gxf7+ ♔xf7 47.♕xh7+ ♔f8 48.e6 (the most adventurous way to finish the game!) 48...♕3c1+ 49.♔e5 ♕e3+ 50.♔f6 and White easily escapes from the checks.

D) 43.e6! is another way to win:



analysis diagram

TASK 24: *Analyse 43.e6! for 5 minutes.*

43...a1♕!? is a defensive idea that keeps recurring whenever White does not threaten anything immediately and gives Black time: 44.♗xa1! (44.♖xa1?? ♕xc3 and Black wins as he is able to create threats and White does not have perpetual check) and now:

D1) 44...♖b6!? defends along the sixth rank and tries to open the a3-f8 diagonal for Black's queen. 45.♖e1! is an important resource. One of the hallmarks of a strong attacking player is that he will continuously bring new units into the attack at the first opportunity. If we can include units that are not already participating in the attack, it's even better: 45...♖xe6 46.♖xe6 fxe6 (46...♕c1+ 47.♖e3 ♕f1+ 48.♔e5!+-) 47.♕h6+ ♔f7 48.♕xh7+ ♔f8 49.♕g8+ ♔e7 50.♕g7#;

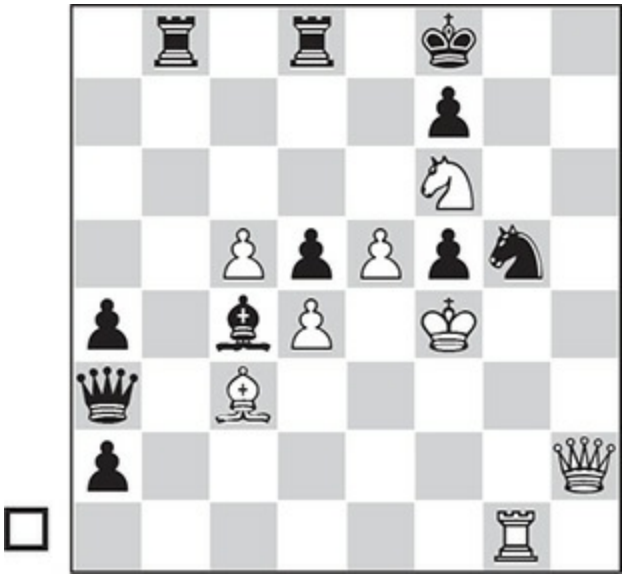
D2) 44...♖b3 (the drawback of ♗xa1 is that it clears the third rank, which Black can try to take advantage of) 45.e7+! is the point of 43.e6: 45...♔xe7 46.♖e1+ ♔f8 47.♕h6#.

43.♕g3!?

A) 43.♔xg5 is very unambitious! 43...♖h8=;

B) With 43.♖g1 White can try to bring more units to the scene of action, which is in general a very good strategy:

B1) 43...♔f8??



analysis diagram

TASK 26: *Find the winning continuation for White. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

44.♕h6+ ♔e7 45.♕xg5! (45.♘g8+ ♖xg8 46.♕d6+ ♔e8 47.♕xb8+ ♔e7 48.♕d6+ ♔e8=). All kinds of discovered checks are now possible:
45...♕xc3 46.♘e4+! (a little care will go a long way towards achieving our objective! 46.♘xd5+?? ♔e6 47.♘xc3 ♖xd4+ 48.♔f3 ♖d3+ 49.♔f4 (49.♔f2?? ♖b2+ 50.♘e2 ♖xe2+ 51.♔xe2 ♖g3+-+) 49...♖d4+=) 46...♔d7 47.♘xc3+-;

B2) 43...a1♕ 44.♖xg5+ ♔f8 45.♕h6+ ♔e7 46.♘g8+ ♔e8! (46...♖xg8?? 47.♕d6+ ♔e8 48.♖xg8#) 47.♕c6+ ♔f8 48.♕h6+=;

B3) 43...♕xc3 (the drawback of 43.♖g1 is that it abandons the d4-pawn,

and Black takes immediate advantage of this. In complex positions, exploiting the drawback of the opponent's previous move is usually the best concept) 44.♖xg5+ ♔f8 45.♕h6+ ♔e7 46.♘g8+! ♔e8! (by now, the familiar defence for Black!) 47.♕c6+ (47.♘f6+ ♔e7=) 47...♔f8 48.♕h6+=.

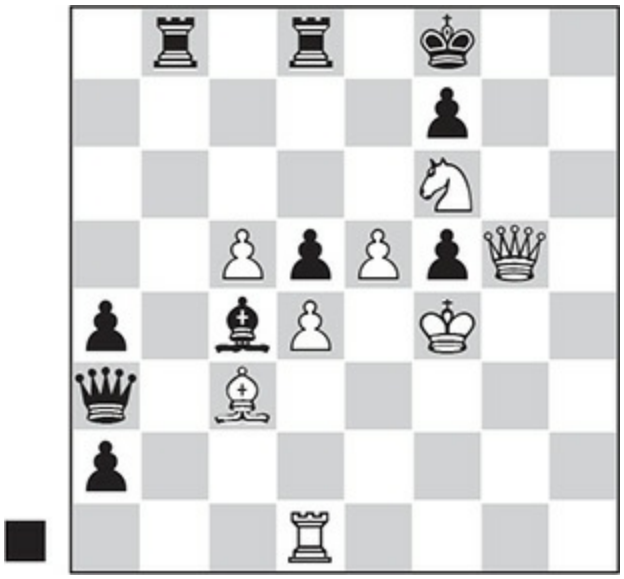
43...♔f8!

A) 43...♖h8? 44.♕xg5+ ♔f8 45.e6! ♕xc3 (45...fxe6 46.♖h1+-) 46.e7+ ♔xe7 47.♘xd5++-;

B) 43...♖b1? 44.♕xg5+ ♔f8 45.e6 ♖xd1 46.♕g8+ ♔e7 47.♕xf7#;

C) 43...♕xc3??. Unfortunately for Black, this little trick does not work: 44.♕xg5+ (44.♕xc3? is too greedy and would backfire badly for White: 44...♖b3 45.♕c2 (if 45.♕a5, 45...♔g6!-+ is a cool move!) 45...♘e6+ 46.♔xf5 ♗d3+! 47.♖xd3 a1♕ and suddenly, it is the white king who will be hunted down) 44...♔f8 transposes to the game.

44.♕xg5



TASK 27: *Find the only defence available for Black. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

44...♕xc3??

A) 44...♖b2? 45.♘e4! (45.♗xb2? ♕xb2=) 45...♔e8 46.♖h1 ♔d7 47.♕xf5+ ♔c6 48.♕f6+ ♔c7 49.♕xf7+ ♖d7 50.♗a5++-;

B) 44...a1♕! is the only move: 45.♖xa1 (45.e6? ♕3c1+-+) 45...♕xc3. Now White doesn't have enough time to deliver a mating attack and defend against the threats to his own king. Hence, a draw will be the fair outcome: 46.♘h7+ ♔e8 47.♘f6+.

45.e6!! 1-0

Now it's over as quickly as it started: 45...a1♕ (45...fxe6 46.♕g8+ ♔e7 47.♕g7#) 46.♕g8+ ♔e7 47.♕xf7#.

Conclusion: Despite the initial position looking extremely complex, we can see that with correct play from both sides, the position is equal, or in computer terminology it is 0.00! With the arrival of analytical engines with powerful hardware support, humans are learning that even extremely complex positions can be analysed, with greater effort involved than normal, to their logical conclusion.

In my training with young players for over a decade, I have seen that analysing very complicated positions without the help of moving pieces on the board is not only possible, but even essential for quicker and long-lasting improvement in a player's analytical capabilities. This will require the coach to be patient and believe in the capabilities of his student in the long run. From the players' part, they must put in a genuine effort to try to analyse the positions without giving in to self-defeating doubts. In my academy, even 1800-level players can follow all the analysis like this with some effort and without a chessboard. It is simply a question of patience and perseverance.

One of the main aims of this book is to emphasise the importance of calculating long variations correctly, with multiple branches if necessary, and acquire that skill with proper training. I perfectly understand this is not something everyone can do, but it is something every aspiring, ambitious player should strive to acquire. It is definitely possible to make significant improvement in our calculation and analytical skills, provided we are willing to train ourselves properly. In most positions, there are plenty of resources available, and it makes sense to upgrade our skills so that we can bring them out in our analysis and take an informed decision.

Some of the questions that come to our mind with such an approach are:

1. Can anyone who is willing to train properly acquire this skill?

2. If yes, how long is it likely to take to acquire this skill?

3. What about the time factor? Will we not get into time trouble if we try to do this in a tournament game?

4. When should we take this approach of calculating deeper, only at critical moments or for all positions?

5. How can we identify these critical moments?

6. Is it really necessary to go so deep into our analysis? Can't we rely on our intuition in such situations?

7. Would not briefly checking our analysis and trusting our intuition be a better, practical approach?

My views on the above questions are:

1. With proper training, most of us can make significant improvements in our calculation and analytical skills. This requires that we are willing to push ourselves hard in our training and do what is necessary towards this end. A few steps that would help us a long way in making steady progress in improving our calculation skill are:

a) Do not move the pieces while solving puzzles or while trying to improve your calculation skills.

b) Finding the correct idea and getting the first or initial moves correctly is not sufficient. We need to get the complete solution correct, to the extent possible.

c) If there is a good defensive idea available for our opponent, we must find it and refute it. Missing our opponent's defensive resource is a common problem for upcoming players. If our analysis has to be objectively correct, we need to pay attention to this aspect.

d) The solution we get after spending our effort, time and energy should be as close to correct as possible, otherwise we are not efficient in our thinking process.

2. Improvement in calculation and analytical skills takes place over a period of time. Rather than focussing on how much time we should be taking to solve puzzles, we should focus more on getting the solutions correct. The

more we solve puzzles correctly, the faster we improve our calculation skills. As our calculation skills improve, our speed improves automatically as well. But if we focus on the time taken to solve the problem initially, we will be compromising the process, which is counter-productive.

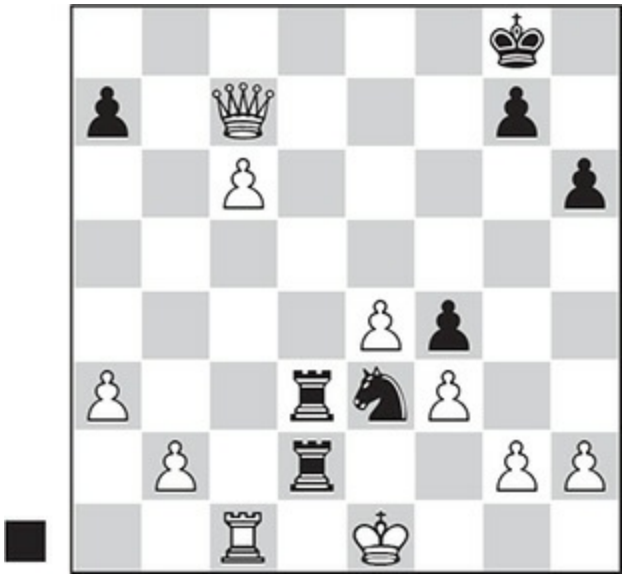
3. There should be a clear distinction between how we train ourselves at home or in our classes and how we analyse during a tournament game. During a tournament game, we need to take into account the tournament situation, the time remaining on the clock, our form or lack of it, our energy level, our concentration, our motivation level, the complexity of the position before us, etc., while deciding how deeply we are going to try to analyse a particular position. If we are running short of time, our energy/concentration/motivation/confidence levels are not up to the mark, and we should not try to analyse too deeply. We should limit our expectations accordingly.

4. Ideally, we should be alert from the start until the very end. We should also learn to relax our mind in between phases of intense concentration. Identifying critical moments is not all that easy in many positions. Being in a high state of alertness helps in general to not miss these critical moments during a game.

Game 58 Level 5

Sopiko Guramishvili	2370
Jorden van Foreest	2612

Wijk aan Zee 2017 (8)



An interesting position. Before we dive into the variations, it will be good to have a broad understanding of what is going on. White's king is more in danger than Black's. Black's pieces are very active and once they start coordinating well, White's king can come under pressure fairly quickly. Materially, White has an advantage and the passed c-pawn can become very threatening.

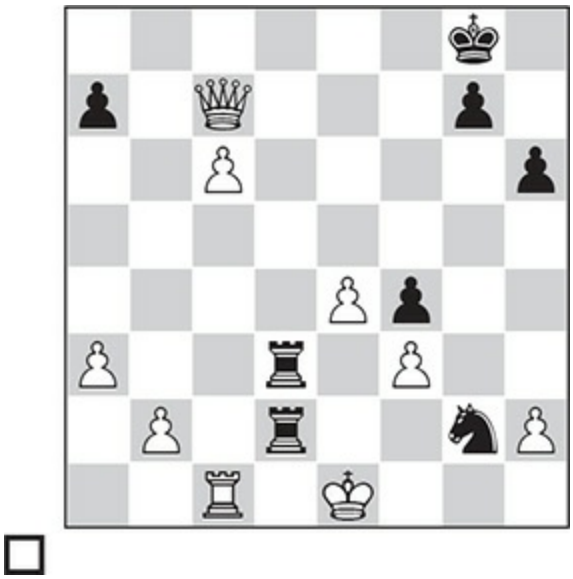
But the most critical factor is that it is Black's turn to move! How can we take advantage of this important factor? Identify at least three critical moves that require our attention. While identifying the moves, there is no need to calculate them. Once we have made a list of interesting possibilities, we can begin the analytical process. The basic requirement is to identify three interesting moves; if you can come up with more than three, then it's completely fine.

31...♔h7!!

To better understand this move, it is essential to get deeper into the variations that follow. Logically, it makes sense to ensure our king is kept out of harm's way, before we explore possibilities of putting our opponent's king in danger. It is very easy to dismiss such slow-looking moves as a waste of time in the heat of analysis, but if we are familiar with such motifs beforehand, we can understand and appreciate the need for playing such moves.

A) 31...♘xg2+!? is the most direct approach for Black to try to either win

or make a draw by force.



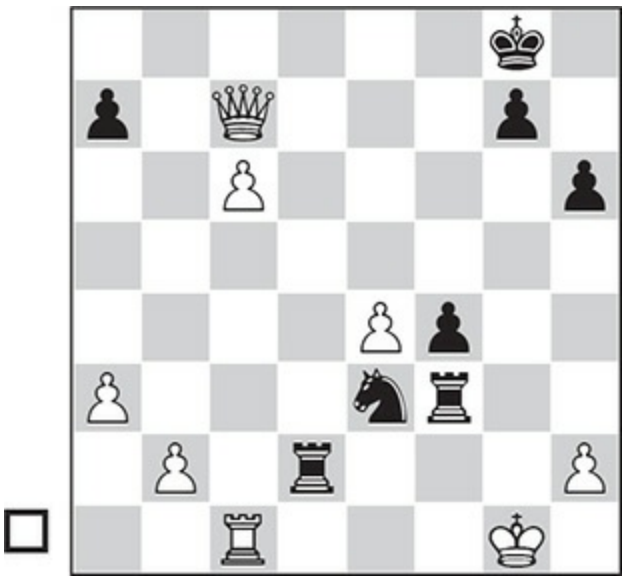
analysis diagram

TASK 1: *Do a preliminary analysis of 31...♘xg2 and identify the important possible continuations to get a better understanding of the position. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

32.♔f1 and now:

A1) 32...♘e3+?! takes too much liberty with time and naturally does not work: 33.♔g1 ♖g2+ (33...♖d1+ is too direct and gets most of the attacking units out of the game to pose any serious problems for White: 34.♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 35.♔f2 ♖d2+ 36.♔e1 ♖c2 (36...♖d1+ 37.♔e2 and Black runs out of checks), threatening perpetual check starting with 37...♘g2+, does not work, e.g. 37.♕xa7 ♘g2+ 38.♔d1 ♘e3+ 39.♕xe3+-) 34.♔h1 ♖dd2 (34...♖gd2 35.♖g1 just backfires) 35.♕xf4 defends all threats against White's king and the c-pawn will march forward in the near future;

A2) 32...♖xf3+!? 33.♔g1 ♘e3!? (33...♘h4? as a way to coordinate Black's pieces does not work, as it allows 34.♕c8+ ♔h7 35.♕g4, neutralising all of Black's threats).

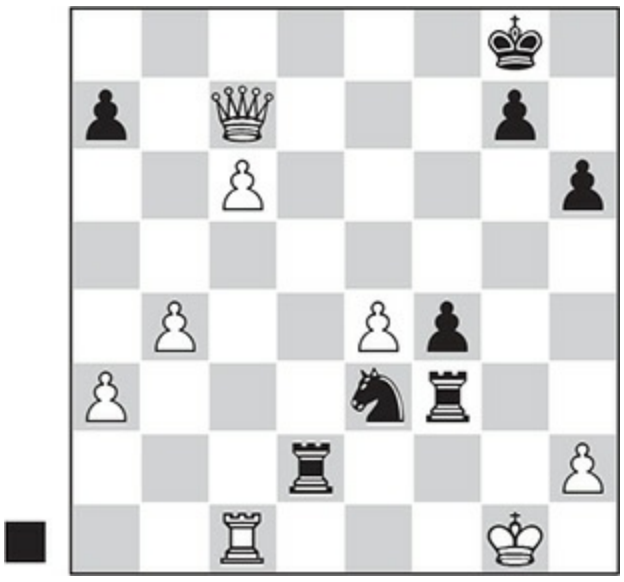


analysis diagram

TASK 2: *List the various interesting options available to White and make a preliminary analysis to the extent possible. Time to be taken: 10 minutes.*

Let us try to understand the reasoning behind this ‘quiet’ move. The knight gets out of the way, to allow the black rooks to combine and create fresh threats against the white king – but not too out of the way to not have any role in the attack!

A21) 34.b4!?



analysis diagram

TASK 3: *Find the winning continuation for Black. Time to think: 7 to 10 minutes.*

This variation is given for the pure beauty of it! It threatens to simply roll the queenside pawns and retains the option of giving a check on c8 with the queen, and then move the queen to h3 to defend the kingside when required.

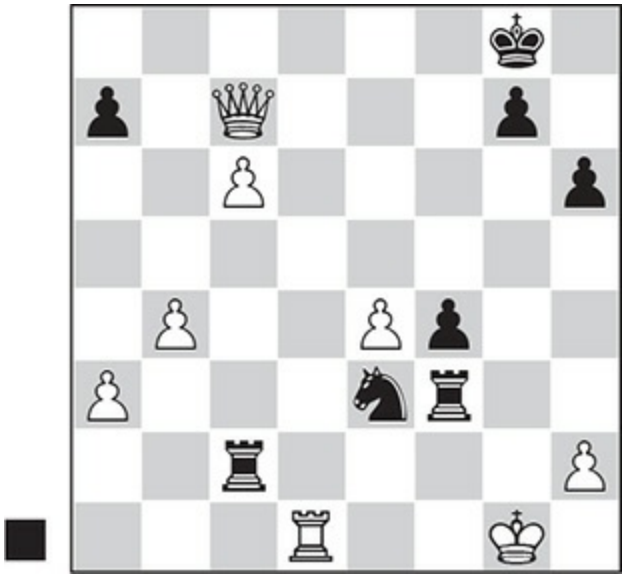
A211) 34...♖df2?! looks very attractive, but does not work after 35.♕d8+ ♔h7 36.♕d3! ♖g2+ 37.♔h1 ♖h3 38.e5+!=. White escapes with a perpetual check, which was the point of 36.♕d3!;

A212) 34...♖ff2? is a direct mating attack that does not work: 35.♕c8+ (one of the main reasons why 31...♔h7!! works is that it avoids this check and that the queen is going to h3 to defend the kingside) 35...♔h7 36.♕h3+-, justifying White's slow improvement approach with 34.b4!?;

A213) 34...♔h7?! is only good enough for a draw: 35.♕d7 ♖c2 36.♖e1 ♖cf2 37.h4! ♖f1+ 38.♖xf1 ♖xf1+ 39.♔h2 ♖f2+=, a nice coordination of Black's pieces)

A214) 34...♖c2! and now:

A2141) 35.♖d1!?



TASK 4: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

35...♖ff2 (35...♖cf2? 36.♕d8+ ♔h7 37.♕d3! ♖g2+ 38.♔h1 ♖h3 39.e5+!=, this is the point of 37.♕d3; 35...♔h7!-+) 36.♕c8+ ♔h7 37.♕h3. Generally, this should be enough to neutralise Black's threats and White could focus on advancing his c-pawn but in this position Black has occupied the c-file forcefully, and this makes it possible for him to stop worrying about the c-pawn and focus on continuing his attack: 37...f3! (adding fuel to the fire) 38.c7, using the c-pawn as a distraction, which Black can safely ignore:

A21411) 38...♖g2+? throws away the win: 39.♔h1 ♘xd1 40.♕xf3 ♖g6!? 41.♕xd1 ♖xc7∞;

A21412) 38...♖fe2! clears the way for the f-pawn to advance and removes the ♖c2 from the defensive role of protecting the hanging rook on f2, e.g. 39.♕xf3 (39.♖f1 f2+ 40.♔h1 ♖e1-+ or 40.♖xf2 ♖e1+!-+) 39...♖g2+ 40.♕xg2 ♖xg2+ 41.♔h1 ♖c2 and Black wins as he is on time to stop the pawn and retain the extra piece.

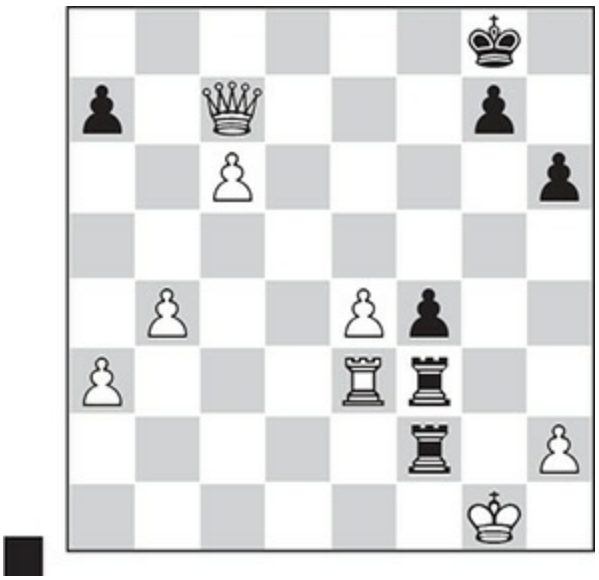
A2142) 35.♖e1 and now:

A21421) 35...♖ff2?! 36.♕c8+ ♔h7 37.♕h3 ♖g2+ (37...f3 is an idea that worked for 35.♖d1, but does not work here – 38.♖xe3) 38.♔h1=;

A21422) 35...♖g2+?. Accuracy is required. The problem while analysing these types of positions is that many ideas seem to work and they arise repeatedly in different positions, but these ideas work only in a particular position and not in others. It can easily become overwhelming if we are not paying attention. We should pay attention to the implementation of our ideas, rather than to the ideas themselves. 36.♔h1 ♖ff2 37.♕c8+ ♔h7 38.♕h3 f3 39.c7 (making use of the only strength/threat in White's position) 39...♘g4 40.♕xg4 (White escapes from her troubles in this manner; 40.c8♕ is also good enough for a draw: 40...♖xh2+ 41.♔g1 (41.♕xh2?? ♖xh2+ 42.♔g1 ♖g2+-+) 41...♖xh3 42.♕f5+=) 40...♖xh2+ 41.♔g1 ♖fg2+ 42.♕xg2 ♖xg2+ 43.♔f1 ♖c2! 44.♖e3 and Black cannot get more than a draw;

A21423) 35...♖cf2! is the most accurate move among the many obvious and similar looking continuations. Let's have a good look at White's various replies:

A214231) 36.♖xe3



analysis diagram

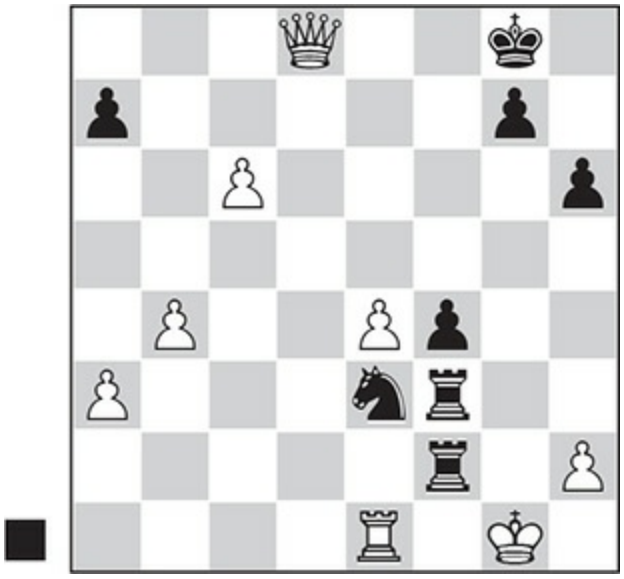
TASK 5: *Find the winning continuation for Black. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

36...fxe3 37.♕d8+ ♔h7 38.c7 ♖f1+! (38...e2?? 39.♕d2∞; 38...♖f8! 39.c8♕ ♖f1+ 40.♔g2 ♖xd8 41.♕xd8 e2 is another way to win for Black) 39.♔g2 ♖3f2+ 40.♔h3 e2 41.c8♕ ♖f3+ 42.♔g4 (42.♔g2 e1♘#! – funny!) 42...♖f4+ 43.♔h3 ♖1f3+ 44.♔g2 e1♘+!-+ 45.♔g1 ♖f1#;

A214232) 36.♕c8+ ♔h7 37.♕a6 ♖g2+ 38.♔h1 ♖h3!-+;

A214233) 36.h4 ♖g2+ 37.♔h1 ♖h3#;

A214234) 36.♕d8+



analysis diagram

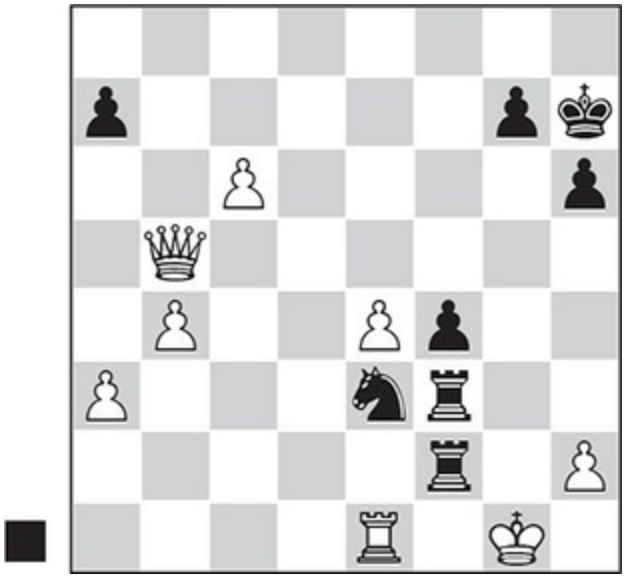
TASK 6: *Find the winning continuation for Black. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

36...♔h7 37.♕d3 ♖g2+! 38.♔h1 ♖xh2+! 39.♔xh2 ♘g4+ 40.♔g1 ♖xd3

A2142341) 41.♖c1, keeping the rook behind the passed pawn, does not help here, as can be seen in the subsequent moves: 41...♖g3+ 42.♔h1 (42.♔f1 f3!, and Black is weaving a beautiful mating net around the white king with his limited units, e.g. 43.c7 (43.♖c2 ♘e3+ 44.♔f2 ♖g2+-+) 43...♖g2 44.c8♕ ♘e3+-+) 42...f3! 43.c7 ♘f2+ 44.♔h2 ♖g2 with mate;

A2142342) 41.c7 ♖c3!-+ is the drawback of 34.b4!?.

A214235) 36.♕b8+ ♔h7 37.♕b5



analysis diagram

TASK 7: *Time to think: 3 minutes.*

37...a6! (we should have found this resource in our thinking time; if 37...♖g2+ 38.♔h1 ♖h3, 39.♕f5+!±; this defensive resource for White should be found in our analysis) 38.♕xa6 ♖g2+ 39.♔h1 ♖h3-+. Now there is no resource of ♕f5 check, as we saw earlier without the intermediate move 37...a6.

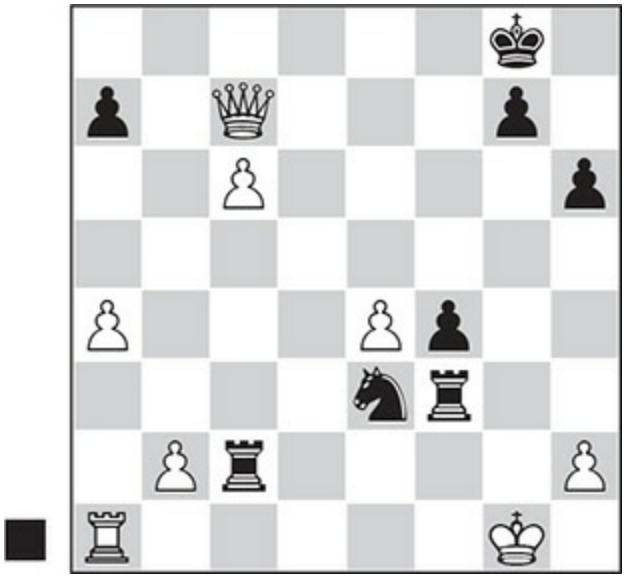
A22) 34.a4!? and now:

A221) 34...♔h7?! 35.♕a5!? (en route to the defence of the king) 35...♖g2+ 36.♔h1 ♖ff2 37.♕h5 ♖c2! 38.♖xc2 ♖xc2 39.h4 ♖xc6∞;

A222) 34...♖ff2? 35.♕c8+ ♔h7 36.♕h3 ♖g2+ 37.♔h1 ♖c2 (37...♘g4 38.♕xg2+-) 38.♖xc2 ♖xc2 39.♔g1! ♖xc6 40.♔f2 and since the white king has come out of the danger zone, with the help of the e-pawn, White should convert this;

A223) 34...♖c2!? and now:

A2231) 35.♖a1?!



analysis diagram

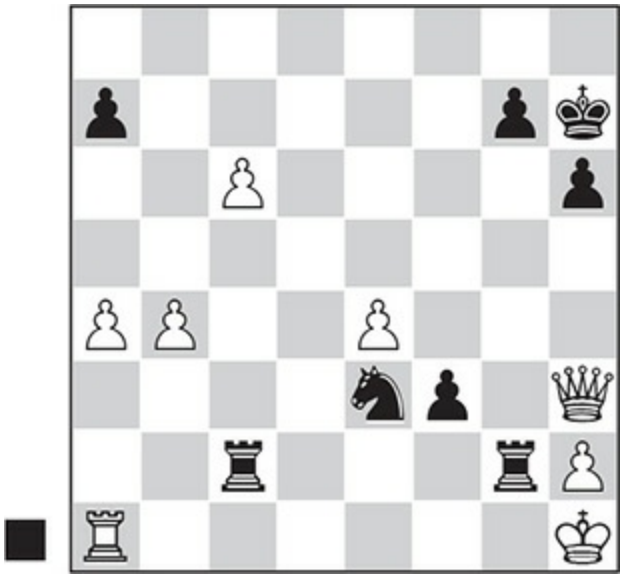
TASK 8: *Find the best continuation for Black first and then for both sides to the extent possible. Time to think: 7 to 10 minutes.*

35...♖ff2! (35...♖g2+? 36.♔h1 ♖ff2 37.♕c8+ ♔h7 38.♕h3 f3 39.c7 ♘g4 40.♕xg4 ♖xh2+ 41.♔g1 ♖fg2+ 42.♕xg2 ♖xg2+ 43.♔f1 ♖c2 44.♖a3=) 36.♕c8+ ♔h7 37.♕h3 f3!. The following lines can be taken as separate tasks for training purposes.

A22311) 38.c7? ♖fe2! (38...♖g2+? 39.♔h1+-) 39.♕xf3 ♖g2+ 40.♕xg2 ♖xg2+ 41.♔h1 ♖c2-+;

A22312) 38.♖e1? ♖g2+! (from a learning and teaching viewpoint, seeing multiple wins is instructive, provided they bring out something creative and beautiful: 38...♖fd2! 39.♕xf3 ♖g2+ 40.♕xg2 ♘xg2!-+ 41.♖f1 ♘h4) 39.♔h1 ♖ce2! (39...f2? 40.♖f1!=) 40.♖a1 f2 41.♕xg2 ♖e1+ (the point of 39....♖ce2) 42.♖xe1 fxe1♕+ 43.♕g1 ♕e2-+;

A22313) 38.b4! (this is not an easy resource to find) 38...♖g2+ 39.♔h1



analysis diagram

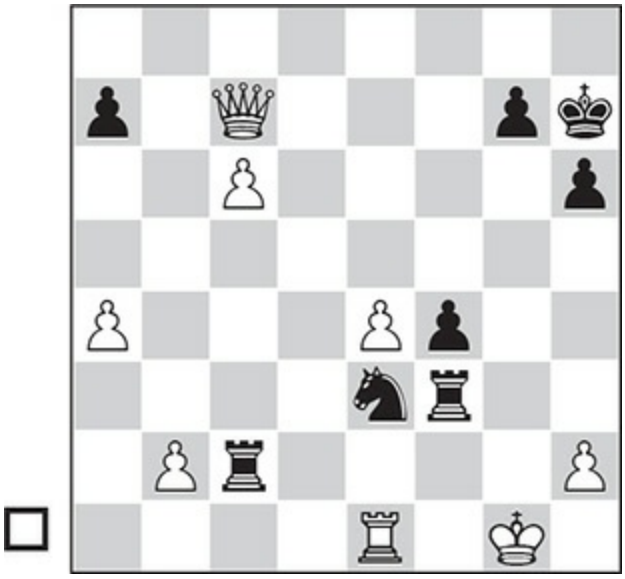
TASK 9: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

39...♖g6! (39...♖ge2 40.♖g1) 40.♕xf3 (40.b5 ♘g4!+-) 40...♘g4! 41.♖f1! (41.b5 ♘f2+-+) 41...♖xh2+ (with the rook on c2, the idea 41...♘xh2? does not work, due to 42.♕d3! ♖a2 43.♖f4! ♘g4 44.♖xg4 ♖xg4 45.c7+-) 42.♔g1 ♖d2! (42...♖c2 43.♔h1) 43.♕g3 (43.♔h1 ♘h2!-+; when Black captures the ♖f1 with the knight on the next move, it will keep the ♖d2 under protection) 43...♘e5 44.♕xg6+ ♔xg6 45.c7 ♖c2 46.♖f5 ♖xc7 47.♖xe5 ♖c4!∓.

A2232) 35.♖e1! and now:

A22321) 35...♖cf2!? works against 34.b4 but not here, e.g. 36.♕d8+ ♔h7 37.♕d3! ♖g2+ 38.♔h1 ♖h3 (38...♖xh2+? 39.♔xh2 ♘g4+ 40.♔g1! ♖xd3 41.c7 is the difference between 34.a4 and 34.b4 !) 39.e5+ ♔h8 40.♕d8+ ♔h7 41.♕d3+=;

A22322) 35...♔h7!?



analysis diagram

TASK 10: *Find the correct defence for White. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

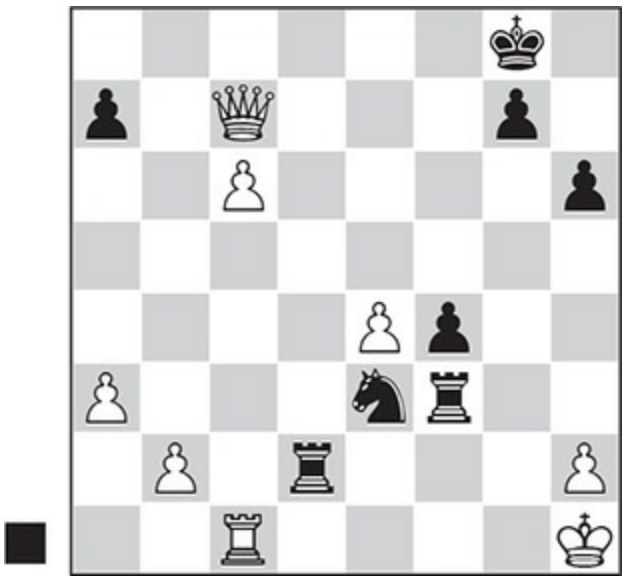
36.♕d7! is the only way for White to survive this position. Black has the following options here:

A223221) 36...♖g2+ 37.♔h1 ♖ff2 38.♕h3 f3 39.c7! ♘g4 40.♕xg4 ♖xh2+ 41.♔g1 ♖fg2+ 42.♕xg2 ♖xg2+ 43.♔f1 ♖c2 44.♖e3 ♖xc7 45.♔f2 with equality;

A223222) 36...♖ff2 37.♕h3 f3?? 38.♖xe3+-; for this reason, Black plays 36...♖e2!?;

A223223) 36...♖e2!? 37.♖c1 ♖ff2 38.♕h3 f3! (now White cannot take the ♘e3 with his rook) 39.c7 (39.♕h5? ♖g2+ 40.♔h1 ♖g4! 41.c7 f2-+) 39...♖g2+ 40.♔h1 f2! (threatening 41...♖e1 checkmate) 41.♕xg2 ♖e1+ 42.♖xe1 fxe1♕+ 43.♕g1 ♕e2 44.♕xe3! ♕xe3 45.c8♕ ♕xe4+ 46.♔g1 ♕b1+ 47.♔g2 ♕xb2+ 48.♔g3 ♕b3+ 49.♔g2 ♕xa4 50.♕f5+ and White escapes by perpetual check!

A23) 34.♔h1?!. Without committing either the queenside pawns or the queen, White wants to keep all his options open.



analysis diagram

TASK 11: *How should Black punish 34.♔h1?! ? Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

A231) 34...♖df2? 35.♖g1+-;

A232) 34...♘d1!? 35.♔g1 ♖e3 (weaving a mating net around the white king) 36.♕b8+ ♔h7 37.♕xf4 ♖e1+ 38.♕f1 ♖xf1+ 39.♔xf1 ♘e3+ 40.♔e1 ♖d8 41.♔e2 ♘g4 42.b4∞. Despite having an extra piece, Black does not have much of an advantage, since White has mobile pawns as compensation;

A233) 34...♖ff2!? 35.♕c8+ ♔h7 36.♕h3 f3! and now:

A2331) 37.c7? ♘g4! (this should ideally be found while thinking for 5 to 8 minutes doing **TASK 10**) 38.c8♕ (38.♕xg4 ♖xh2+ 39.♔g1 f2+-+) 38...♖xh2+ 39.♕xh2 (39.♔g1 ♖hg2+ 40.♕xg2 ♖xg2+-+) 39...♖xh2+ 40.♔g1 ♖g2+ 41.♔f1 ♘e3+ 42.♔e1 ♖e2#;

A2332) 37.♔g1? ♖g2+ 38.♔h1 ♖c2-+;

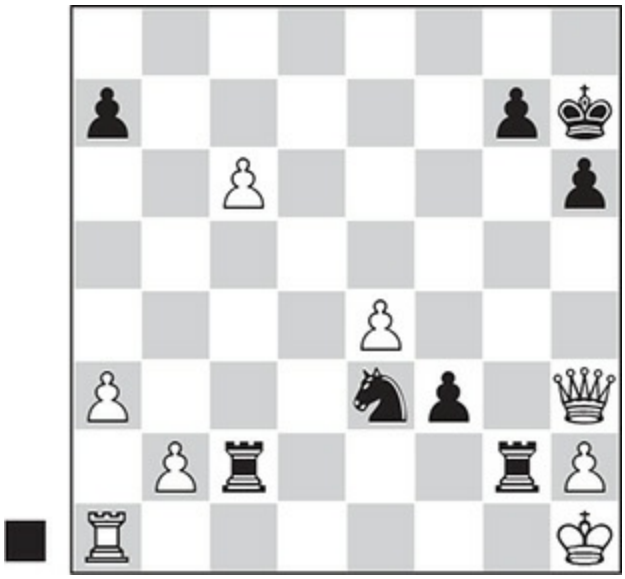
A2333) 37.♖g1 ♖g2! (this also should have been found when doing **TASK 10**) and now:

A23331) 38.c7 ♖xg1+ 39.♔xg1 f2+-+;

A23332) 38.♖a1 ♖ge2! (threatening 39...f2 and 40...♖e1+) 39.c7

(39.♕xf3 ♖xh2+ 40.♔g1 ♖dg2+ 41.♕xg2 ♖xg2+ 42.♔h1 ♖c2-+) 39...f2-+;

A23333) 38.♖c1 ♖c2! (38...♘g4? 39.♕xf3+-) 39.♖a1 (39.♖e1 ♖ce2! 40.♖c1 f2 41.♕xg2 ♖e1+-+):



analysis diagram

TASK 12: *Analyse as deeply as possible. Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

A233331) If 39...f2? White has:

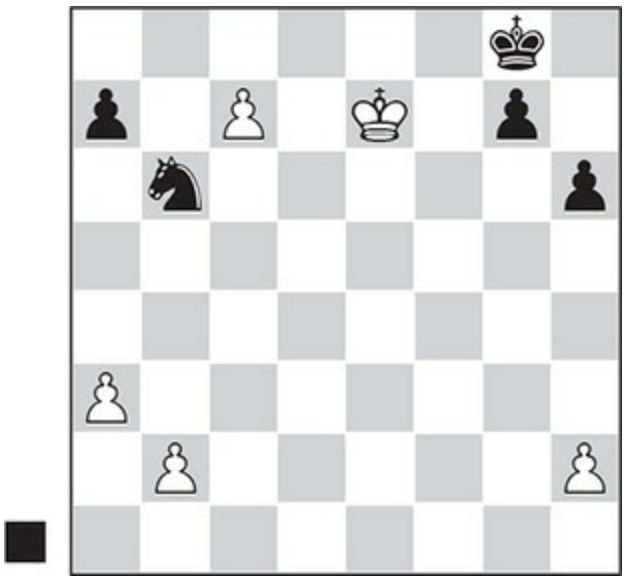
A2333311) 40.c7!? ♖e2! 41.♕xg2 ♖e1+ (41...♘xg2 42.♔xg2 ♖c2 43.♔f3 ♖xc7 44.♖f1±) 42.♕f1! ♖xf1+ (42...♘xf1? 43.♔g2! ♘g3 44.♔xf2 ♖e2+ 45.♔xg3 ♖c2 46.b4 ♖xc7 47.b5+-) 43.♖xf1 ♘xf1 44.♔g2.

An interesting ending that is a sharp contrast to the initial position! I find such positions interesting, where the battle continues across different spectra of themes, piece configurations, pace, and pawn structures. They prepare players to be mentally ready for all kinds of transformations, and make them more responsible in their analysis. A good player needs to be ready to deliver on all kinds of demands in the position.

44...♘d2 45.♔xf2 ♘xe4+ 46.♔e3 ♘d6 47.♔f4! ♘c8 48.♔e5 ♔g8! (48...g5? looks very attractive but unfortunately White pawns are much faster

in this race, e.g. 49.♔e6 g4 50.b4 h5 51.a4 h4 52.♔d7! ♘b6+ 53.♔d8 g3 54.hxg3 hxg3 55.a5+-) 49.♔e6 ♘b6! and now:

A23333111) 50.♔e7



analysis diagram

TASK 13: *Find the draw for Black. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

50...♘d5+ 51.♔d8 ♘xc7 52.♔xc7 h5!! (52...g5?? 53.♔d6 ♔f7 54.♔e5+-) 53.♔d6 h4 54.♔e5 h3 55.♔f4 ♔f7=. The black king successfully penetrates via the queenside and creates sufficient counterplay there with the lone pawn;

A23333112) 50.a4 a5! 51.♔e7 ♘d5+ 52.♔d8 ♘xc7 53.♔xc7 g5=.

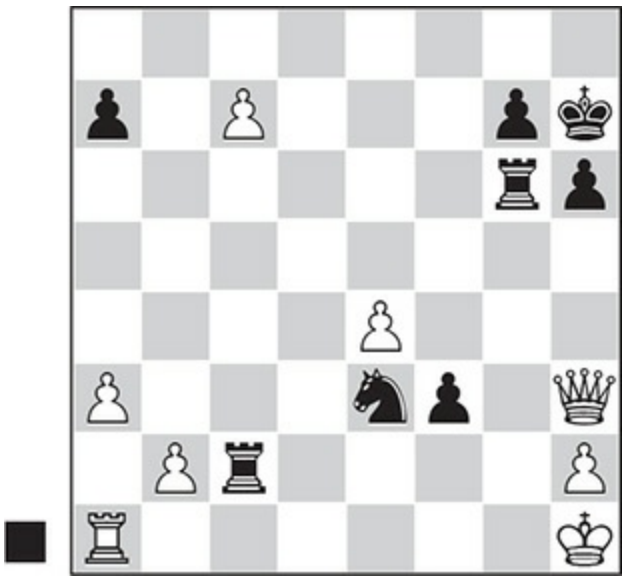
A2333312) 40.♕xg2? ♘xg2 41.♔xg2=;

A2333313) 40.♖f1! ♘xf1 41.♔xg2! ♘xh2 42.♕f5+! ♔g8 43.♕xf2!+-, the c-pawn has the final laugh.

Instead of 39...f2? there is also:

A233332) 39...♖ge2?! 40.♖g1!;

A233333) 39...♖g6! 40.c7 (after 40.♕xf3 ♘g4! Black should win quite easily, for example: 41.h3 (41.♖f1 ♖xh2+! 42.♔g1 ♖xb2-+) 41...♘f2+ 42.♔h2 ♘g4+ 43.♔h1 ♖h2+ 44.♔g1 ♘e5+-+). Now:



analysis diagram

TASK 14: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

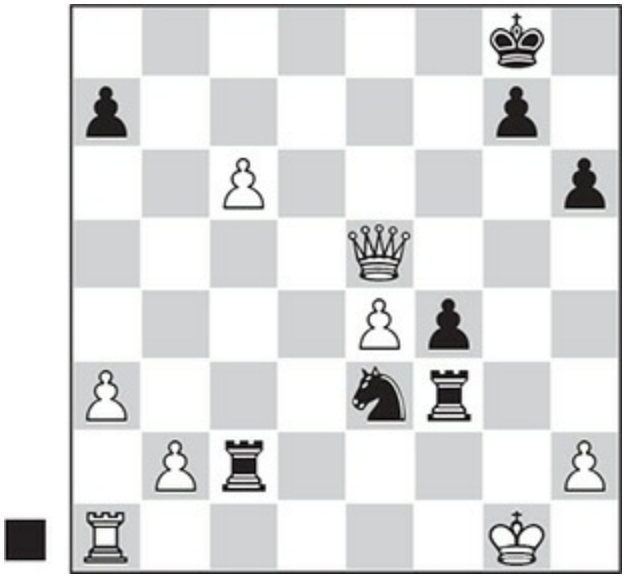
40...♖gc6! (40...♘g4? 41.♖f1=) 41.♖g1 f2! 42.♕xe3 fxg1♕+ 43.♔xg1 ♖xb2∓.

A24) 34.♕d7?! ♖c2! (34...♖g2+? 35.♔h1 ♖ff2 36.♕h3 ♖c2 37.♖xc2 ♖xc2 38.♔g1! and the king will escape the danger zone and White wins; the direct 34...♖df2 does not work due to 35.♕h3!+-) 35.♖e1 ♖cf2 (this is more interesting!; 35...♖e2=) 36.h4 (36.♕d3?? ♖g2+ 37.♔h1 ♖h3!-+; now 36.♕h3? does not work because of 36...♖xh3 37.♔xf2 ♖xh2+ 38.♔f3 ♖c2-+; this is the point of including 34....♖c2 earlier to drive the white rook away from the c-file) 36...♖f1+ 37.♖xf1 ♖xf1+ 38.♔h2 ♖f2+ 39.♔h3 ♖f3+=, a nice coordination of Black's units to earn a draw;

A25) 34.♕c8+?! ♔h7 35.c7 ♖c2 (the most direct approach; 35...♖g2+ 36.♔h1 ♖c2 gives White the extra option to go ♖g1, but on the other hand, the king in the corner can be caught in a mating web: 37.♖g1 ♖ff2 38.♕h3 ♖xc7 39.e5 ♖xb2 and Black's piece activity and White's precarious king position and lack of target ensure the balance in the position) 36.♖e1 (36.♕f5+ ♘xf5 37.♖xc2 ♘e7 38.c8♕ ♘xc8 39.♖xc8 ♖b3 40.♖c7∞) 36...♖cf2 37.h4!=;

A26) 34.♕e5?! ♖c2

A261) 35.♖a1?



analysis diagram

TASK 15: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

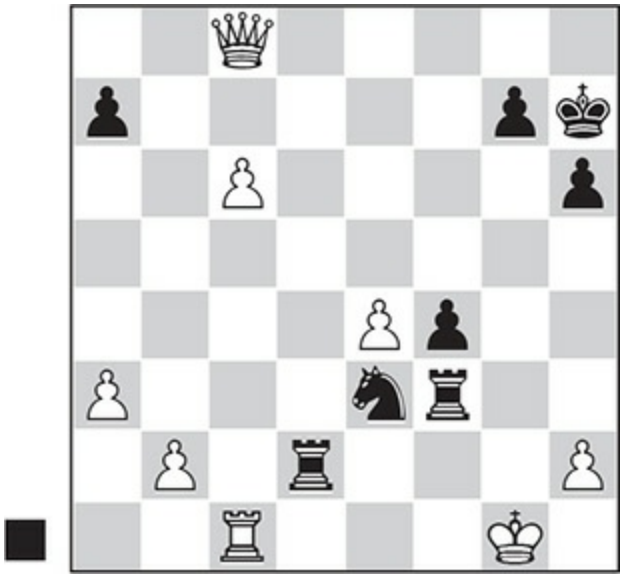
35...♖ff2! (35...♖g2+? 36.♔h1 ♖ff2 37.♕e8+! (a very important resource; the direct 37.♕h5? loses to 37...♘g4) 37...♔h7 38.♕h5! ♘g4 39.♕f5+!=; this is the point!) 36.♕e6+ (36.♕h5 ♖g2+ 37.♔h1 ♘g4-+) 36...♔h7 37.♕h3 f3! wins in a similar manner that we have seen before;

A262) 35.♖e1! ♖ff2 (unambitious is 35...♖e2) 36.♕e6+ ♔h7 37.♕h3 ♖g2+ 38.♔h1 f3 (38...♘g4?? 39.♕xg2+-) 39.c7 ♖ge2! (39...f2?? 40.♖f1!+-) 40.♖g1 f2 41.♖xg7+! (this resource saves the game) 41...♔xg7 42.♕d7+ ♔f6 43.♕d6+ ♔g5 44.♕e5+=.

A27) 34.♕b8+? ♔h7. Now it is Black who is better!

A271) 35.c7 ♖g2+ 36.♔h1 ♖ff2! (just a little bit of accuracy towards the end is all that is required; 36...♖h3?? 37.♕h8+! ♔xh8 38.c8♕+ ♔h7 39.♕xh3+-) 37.♕h8+ ♔xh8 38.c8♕+ ♔h7 39.♕h3 f3-+. Without the c-pawn, there is no counterplay for White;

A272) 35.♕c8



analysis diagram

TASK 16: *Find the win for Black. Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

35...♖c2! 36.♖e1 ♖cf2! (36...♖ff2? 37.♕h3 ♖g2+ 38.♔h1 f3 39.c7 ♖ge2 40.♖g1 f2 41.♖xg7+! – we have already seen this idea before) 37.h4 ♖c2! 38.c7 ♖g3+ 39.♔h1 f3! 40.♕d7 f2 41.♖f1 ♖xc7 42.♕xc7 ♘xf1, threatening 43...♖g1#, wins;

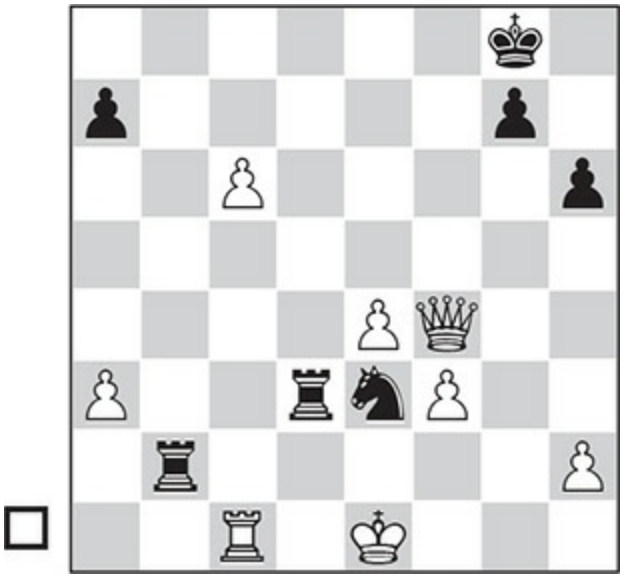
A28) 34.e5!!. With this unexpected move, White achieves multiple aims: the e-pawn advances, and she retains options of ♕c8-♕h3, ♕d8-♕d3 or ♕d7 as the situation demands: 34...♖c2 (34...♖ff2 35.♕c8+ ♔h7 36.♕h3+-; 34...♔h7 35.♕d7!+-, exploiting the unfortunate position of the ♖f3; 34...♖df2 35.♕d8+ ♔h7 36.♕d3++-) 35.♕d8+ ♔h7 36.♕d3+!+-, the point of 34.e5.

B) If 31...♖xg2? White can play:

B1) 32.♕a5? ♖d1+! (a nice trap! 32...♘c2+ 33.♖xc2 ♖xc2 34.♕b5±) 33.♖xd1 ♘c2+=;

B2) 32.♕xf4!? and now:

B21) 32...♖xb2



analysis diagram

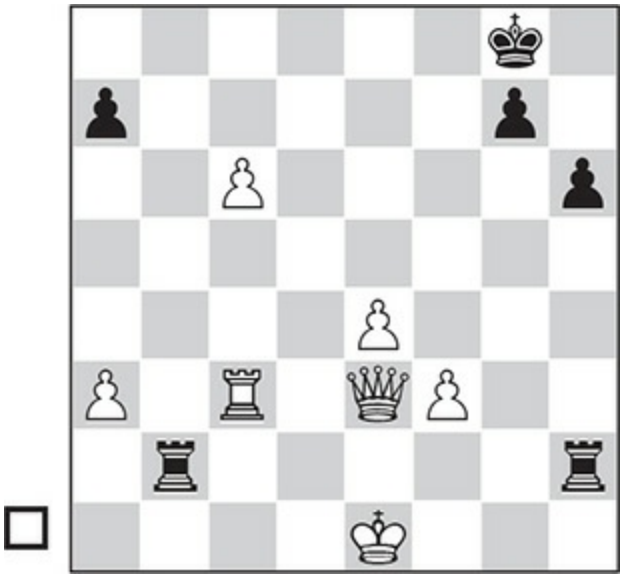
TASK 17: *Find the win for White. Time to think: 10 minutes.*

B211) 33.c7? ♘g2+ 34.♔f1 ♘xf4 35.c8♕+ ♔h7 36.♕g4∞;

B212) 33.♕g3? ♖dd2 34.♕b8+! ♖xb8 35.♔xd2 ♘g2∞;

B213) 33.♕e5!! (this unexpected idea takes all the venom out of Black's threats) 33...♖g2 (33...♖dd2 34.♕xb2! ♖xb2 35.c7+-) 34.♕c3!+-;
34.♕c5! is another way to achieve the same purpose.

B22) 32...♖b3! 33.♖c3! (33.c7 ♖g1+ 34.♔d2 ♖g2+=) 33...♖bxb2 34.♕xe3 ♖xh2



analysis diagram

TASK 18: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

B221) 35.♔d1? ♖h1+ 36.♕e1 ♖b1+ 37.♔d2 ♖hxe1 38.c7 ♖bd1+ 39.♔c2 ♖c1+-+;

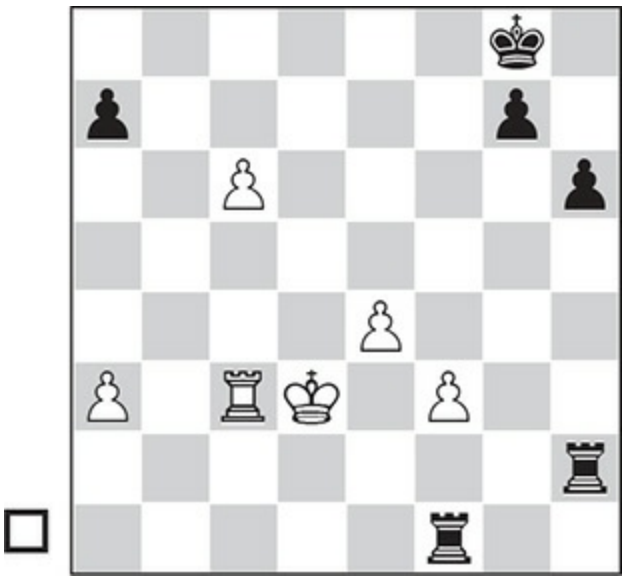
B222) 35.♔f1?! ♖b1+ (35...♖h1+ 36.♕g1 ♖xg1+ 37.♔xg1 ♖b8) 36.♕e1 ♖bb2!=;

B223) 35.♕d3! ♖h1+ 36.♕f1 ♖b1+ 37.♔e2! ♖h2+!? (37...♖hxf1 38.c7 ♖be1+ 39.♔d2 ♖d1+ 40.♔e3+-) and now:

B2231) 38.♔e3? ♖xf1 39.♔f4 ♖xf3+!=;

B2232) 38.♕f2? ♖b2+! 39.♔e1! (39.♔e3 ♖bxf2! 40.c7 ♖xf3+!-+) 39...♖b1+=;

B2233) 38.♔d3! ♖xf1



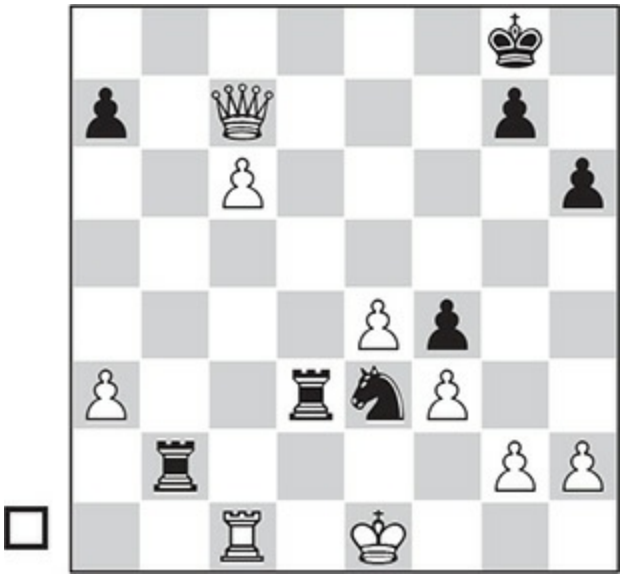
TASK 19: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

39.♔c4!. We should calculate until here while analysing move 33; 39.c7?? ♖xf3+ 40.♔c4 ♖f8, or 40.♔d4 ♖d2+ 41.♔c4 ♖f8-+.

B3) 32.♕c8+? ♔h7 33.♕h3 ♖xb2-+ (33...♖dd2 34.♕xg2 ♖xg2 35.♖c3!+-; not 35.c7 ♘c2+=) 34.♕d7 (34.c7 ♖dd2-+) 34...♘g2+ 35.♔f1 ♖xd7 36.cxd7 ♖d2 37.♖c7 ♘e3+ 38.♔e1 ♖d1+ 39.♔e2 ♔g6 40.♖xa7 ♔f6 41.a4 ♔e6 42.d8♕ ♖xd8 43.♖xg7 ♘c4-+;

B4) 32.♕d7!+-.

C) 31...♖xb2?



analysis diagram

TASK 20: *White to play and win. Time to think: 3 minutes.*

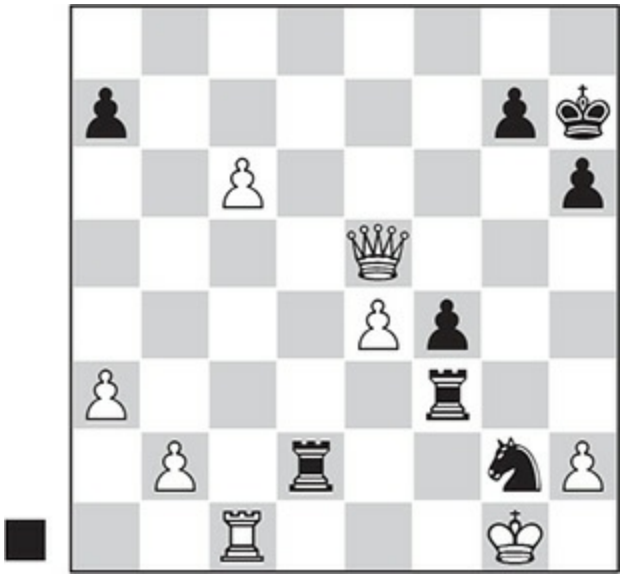
32.♕xa7 ♔h7! is unclear (32...♖dd2 33.♕b8+! – not 33.♕xe3 fxe3 34.c7 ♖e2+ 35.♔f1 ♖f2+ 36.♔e1 ♖be2+ 37.♔d1 ♖f1+ 38.♔xe2 ♖xc1-+) but 32.♕d7! wins.

32.♕a5

A) 32.♕c8? ♖xb2! 33.♕d7 ♘xg2+ 34.♔f1 ♖xd7 35.cxd7 ♖d2-+;

B) 32.♕e5!? and now:

B1) 32...♘xg2+!? 33.♔f1 ♖xf3+ 34.♔g1

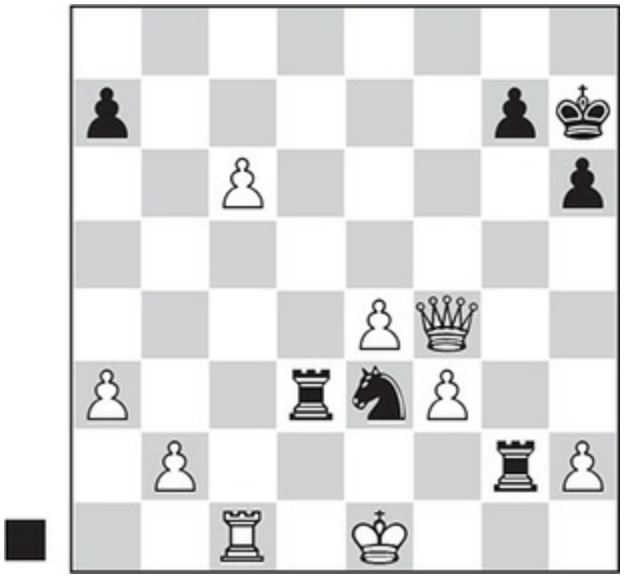


analysis diagram

TASK 21: *Find the best continuation for both sides to its logical conclusion. Time to think: 10 minutes.*

34...♘h4! 35.♕h5! (35.c7?? ♖g2+ 36.♔h1 ♖ff2 37.♕xf4 ♖xf4 38.c8♕ ♖gf2! 39.h3 ♘f3 40.♖c2 ♖f1+ 41.♔g2 ♘e1+ 42.♔g3 ♖1f3+ 43.♔h2 ♘xc2-+) 35...♖g2+ 36.♔h1 ♖c2! (36...♖h3? 37.♕f5+ ♘xf5 38.♔xg2!+-) 37.♖g1! ♖h3! 38.♖xg7+! ♔xg7 39.♕e5+=.

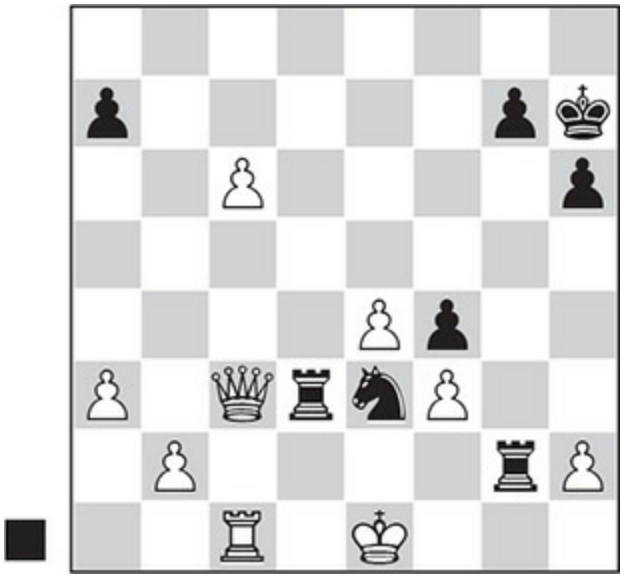
B2) 32...♖xg2 33.♕xf4



analysis diagram

TASK 22: *Find the best defensive idea for Black and calculate until the end. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

33...♖b3! sets up an unusual perpetual with ...♖g1+-g2+ (33...♖xb2? 34.♕e5!+-): 34.♕g3 ♘c2+= (34...♖bxb2? 35.♕xg2!+-). 32...♖xg2! 32...♘xg2+? 33.♔f1 ♘e3+ 34.♔g1 ♖g2+ 35.♔h1 ♖gd2 36.♕xd2+-.
33.c7
33.♕c3



analysis diagram

TASK 23: *Find the defence for Black. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

33...♖d6! 34.c7 ♖g1+ 35.♔f2 ♖g2+ with a draw.
The game ended as follows:
33...♖d1+! 34.♖xd1 ♘c2+ 35.♔f1 ♘e3+ 36.♔e1 ½-½

I would stress this point: We need to cultivate our analytical skills to search for truth in all its glory without letting our shortcomings (laziness, lack of curiosity, etc.) get in the way. Bring out as many of the facts about the position into the open as you can, and, in the process, grow stronger. This is

the best way to learn and improve our skills in chess.

We should be curious to know how our mind works and enhance its performance by adding more tools to its thinking and analytical processes. Initially, we lit a fire by rubbing stones against each other, which was a great find at that point. But, we did not stop there and grew by developing more complex forms like matchboxes, lighters, etc., progressively. This made our life easier!

We found a solution to the problem we were facing at that point, but we should never stop there. We should also never stop the quest of finding lasting solutions that may sometimes be simple, sometimes complex, or a mixture. The larger our arsenal of ideas, the better-equipped we are to deal with them!

Let us check an example in chess terms. Let's say a player begins with the Exchange Variation against the French Defence and initially scores very well with it. There may be a tendency for him to get satisfied and keep this line as his main repertoire, but he lacks the idea of growth or learning the main lines. Under different circumstances of advancing to a slightly higher level, he might be unequipped entirely to achieve good results against stronger opposition because of his limited opening choice.

This quest for growing from simple to complex, and finally the whole thing becoming simple again, led man to come up with matchboxes, lighters, cooking gas, turbines, boilers, engines, etc. We evolved from simple to complex. Complexity is not something we should be afraid of in the long run. From complexity, things eventually become simpler.

My iPhone 11 is more complex and has more features than my iPhone 1. Which is easier to use? On which phone can we get more things done?
Our current low competence level should not scare us from evolving from simple to complex. With adequate training, we can accumulate the complex skills required to handle the complex challenges we face. This is the way to become more robust and show real growth.

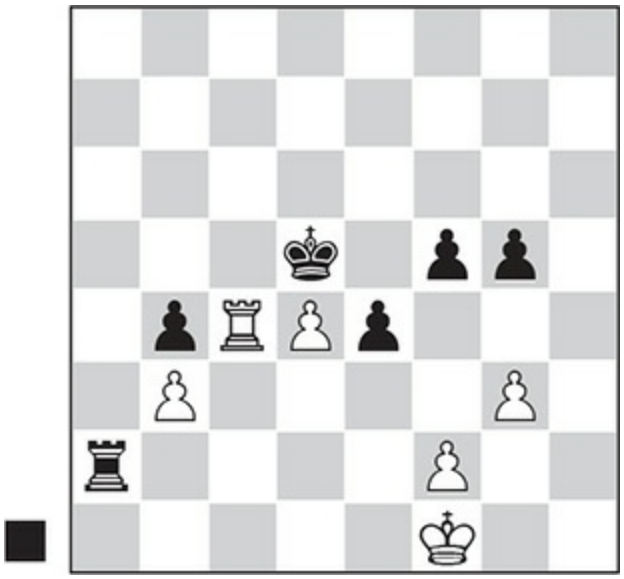
Let us now see many interesting positions for different levels of players in the following pages.

Game 59 Level 3

Yannick Pelletier 2440

Eduardas Rozentalis 2610

Yerevan ol 1996 (3)

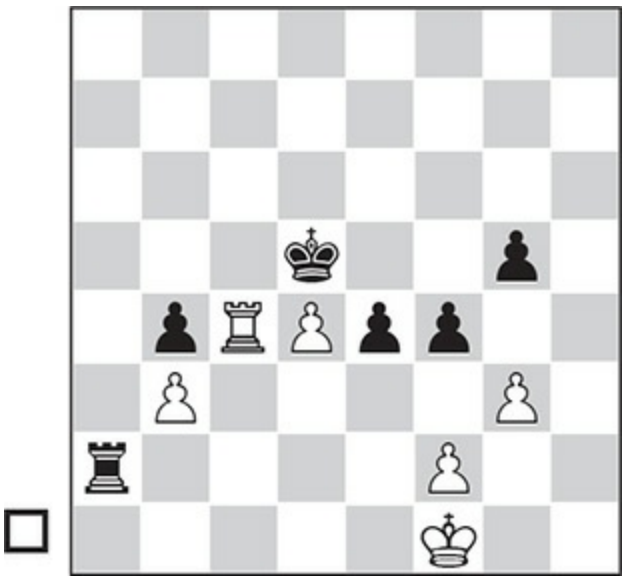


TASK 1: *Time to be taken: 10 minutes.*

41...g4!

At first glance, this does not make much sense. But on deeper inspection, we can appreciate its strength.

A) 41...f4? is tempting but not good enough to win:



analysis diagram

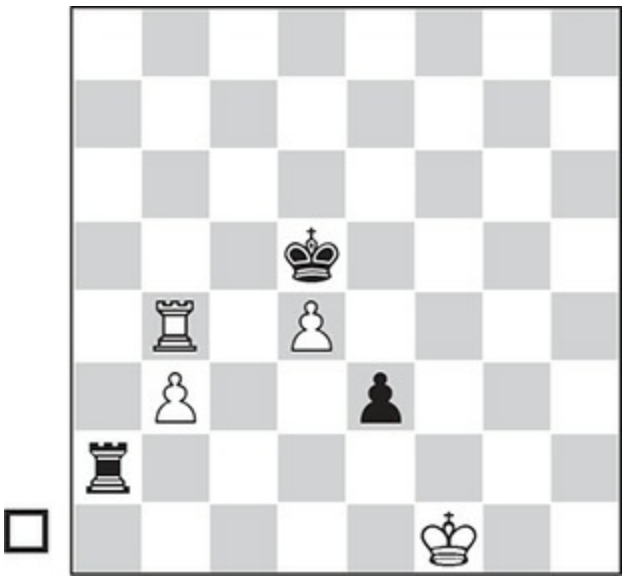
TASK 2: *Refute 41...f4? in 5 minutes.*

42.gxf4 (42.♖c5+? loses in many ways, but was suggested as a possible defence by a few students: 42...♔xd4 43.♖xg5 f3 44.♔g1 ♖a1+ 45.♔h2 ♖f1-+) 42...gxf4 43.♖xb4 and now:

A1) 43...f3 44.♔e1 (44.♔g1?? ♖a1+ 45.♔h2 e3!-+; 44.♖a4 ♖b2 45.♔e1 also achieves the same aim) 44...♖a1+ 45.♔d2 ♖f1 46.♔e3 ♖e1+ 47.♔f4 ♖e2 48.♔g3=;

A2) 43...♖a1+ 44.♔g2 f3+ 45.♔g3=;

A3) 43...e3 44.fxe3 fxe3.



analysis diagram

TASK 3: *White to play and hold the position. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

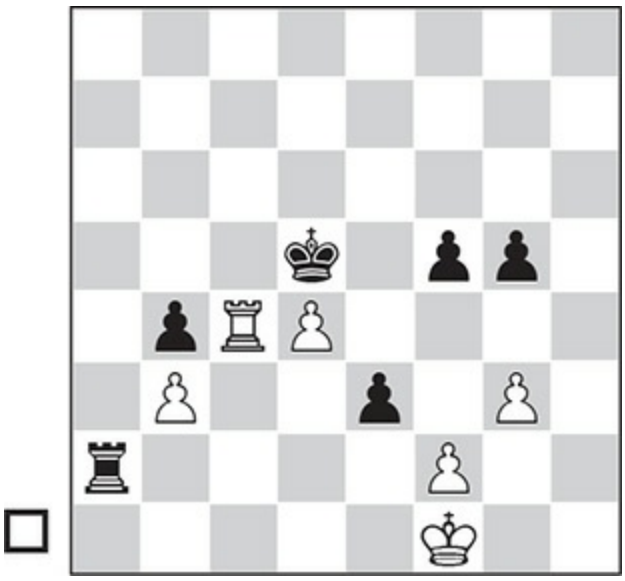
Black's plan is ...♔d5-e4-d3 and it's over. Without the white pawns, this is an easy Philidor draw: get the white rook to the third rank and draw. This leads us to the right path.

45.♖a4! ♖b2 and now:

A31) 46.♖a8!? (for the sake of entertainment!) 46...♔e4 47.b4! (47.d5?? ♔d3 48.d6 ♖f2+! (48...♔d2?? 49.♖e8!+-) 49.♔e1 (49.♔g1 ♖f7! 50.♖e8 e2-+) 49...♖h2 50.♔f1 e2+-+) 47...♔d3 48.♖a3+ (48.♖a1 ♖h2 49.♖a3+=) 48...♔d2 49.♖a1=. When playing against a single central pawn, the defending rook should be three files away from the pawn, to have checking distance, and the defending king should be on the short side of the pawn to draw, which is the case here. 49...♖xb4 (49...e2+ 50.♔f2=) 50.♖a2+ ♔d3 51.♖a3+=;

A32) 46.b4! (clearing the third rank for the white rook) 46...♔e4 47.♖a8 ♔d3 48.♖a3+ ♔d2 49.♖a1!=, as seen above.

B) 41...e3?



analysis diagram

TASK 4: *Refute 41...e3? in 3 minutes.*

42.fxe3 ♔e4 43.♖xb4 ♔f3. This looks dangerous but it can be handled with accurate play. One point to remember is that against a passed knight's pawn, passive defence by keeping both the rook and king on the first rank holds the draw: 44.♖a4! ♖b2 45.♖a1! ♔xg3 46.♖a5!? (46.♖d1? f4!-+; 46.d5!? ♔f3 47.♖d1=) 46...f4 47.exf4! (47.♖xg5+?? ♔f3-+) 47...gxf4 48.♖g5+!? (48.♖f5!? ♔f3 49.♔g1=) 48...♔f3 49.♔g1=.

42.♖xb4

42.♖c5+ ♔xd4 43.♖xf5 ♔c3. Suddenly, Black shifts his attention to the queenside pawns, and the passed b-pawn will be unstoppable soon: 44.♖e5 ♔xb3 45.♖xe4 ♔c3 46.♖e3+ ♔c4 47.♖e4+ ♔b5 48.♖xg4 (48.♖e3 ♔a4-+) 48...b3 49.♖g8 ♖a6!, and the b-pawn rolls all the way!

42...f4!

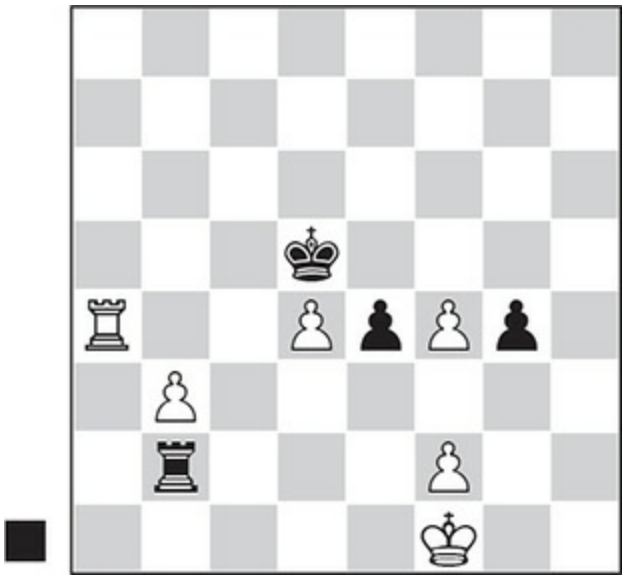
Black's intent becomes clearer. He wants to create a passed pawn on the e-file and not give White time to clear the third rank by advancing b3-b4, as was seen earlier.

43.♖a4

If 43.gxf4, 43...g3! is the correct way, transposing to what happened in the main line. 43...e3? does not work due to the 'passive' defence strategy:

44.fxe3 ♔e4 45.♖a4 ♖b2 46.d5+ ♔f3 47.♖a1=. Without the white pawns too, Black cannot make any progress with the knight's pawn against 'passive' defence.

43...♖b2 44.gxf4



TASK 5: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

44...g3!

44...e3? 45.fxe3 ♔e4 46.d5+ ♔f3 47.♖a1=.

45.fxg3 e3

The black king becomes too active too soon, and White does not have time to reach the third rank with his rook, to drive the king away.

46.f5 ♔e4 47.f6

A) 47.b4 ♔f3 48.♖a1 ♖f2+ 49.♔g1 ♖g2+ 50.♔h1 ♖xg3 51.♖f1+ (51.f6 ♔f2-+ 52.♔h2 e2 53.f7 ♖f3-+) 51...♔e2 52.♖f4 ♖f3-+;

B) 47.d5+ ♔f3! 48.♖f4+ ♔xg3. (how White wishes the white f-pawn was not there!) 49.♖c4 (49.f6 ♔xf4 50.f7 ♖f2+-+) 49...♔f3-+. Passive defence does not work here for White.

47...♔f3 48.♖a1 ♖g2! 0-1

Accuracy until the end!

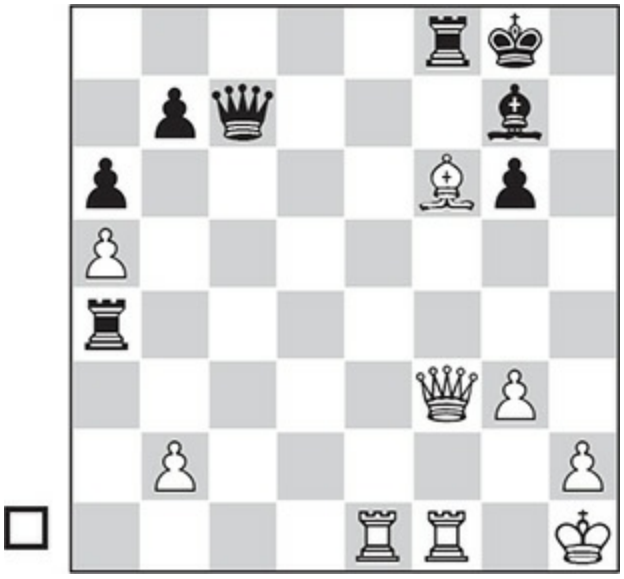
49.♖e1 (49.f7 e2+ 50.♔e1 ♔e3-+, and thanks to the presence of the b3-pawn, Black wins!) 49...e2+ 50.♖xe2 ♖xe2 51.f7 ♖f2+-+.

The natural-looking move 48...♖h2?? does not achieve the same objective: 49.♔g1 ♖g2+ 50.♔h1=.

Game 60 Level 3

Alexander Khalifman	2630
Johann Hjartarson	2550

Reykjavik 1991



TASK 1: *How can White play for a win? Calculate the variations. Time to think: 7 to 10 minutes.*

33.♕d5+

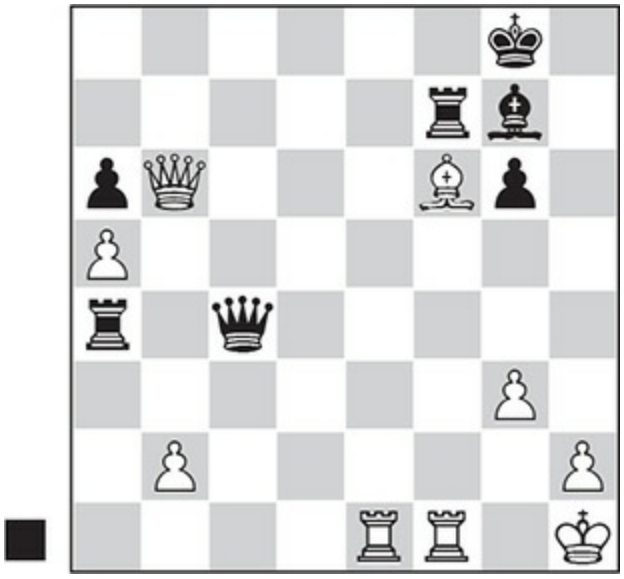
It is important that we see both the 33.♕b3+ and the 33.♕d5+ options for White, analyse them as deeply as we can and evaluate them clearly before taking a decision. The time given to think will be a bit tight for some players. In that case, take as long as you require.

33.♕b3+!? ♕c4 (33...♖c4 34.♖e4+-) 34.♕xb7. White is threatening to play 35.b3 and give mate on g7:

A) 34...♖xf6? 35.♖xf6 ♗xf6 36.♖e8#;

B) 34...♗xf6? 35.b3! ♖b4 (35...♕b4 36.♕d5+) 36.♖xf6! ♖xb7 (36...♖xf6 37.♖e8+ ♖f8 38.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 39.♕a8+) 37.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 38.bxc4 and the resultant rook ending is clearly better for White;

C) 34...♕f7 35.♖e7+-;
D) 34...♖f7! 35.♕b6!? (35.♖e8+?! ♔h7 36.♕g2 ♖xa5=).

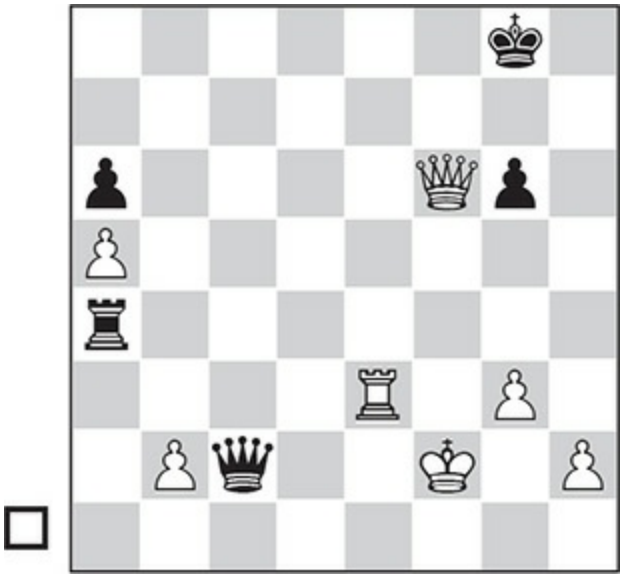


analysis diagram

It looks like White has given up his ambitions of playing for an advantage, but White simply retains his extra pawn, and Black is forced to look for a concrete solution.

TASK 2: *Find a good defence for Black. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

D1) The continution 35...♕d5+ may have attracted many players, as it should: 36.♔g1 ♖xf6!? (36...♕xa5 37.♕e6! ♕c5+ 38.♔g2!±; 36...♗f8 37.♖e8+-) 37.♖xf6 ♗xf6 38.♕xf6 ♕c5+ 39.♔g2 ♕d5+ 40.♔f2! ♕c5+ (40...♕d2+? 41.♖e2+-) 41.♖e3 ♕c2+



analysis diagram

TASK 3: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

42.♔f3! ♕d1+ (I gave the initial position on move 33 to a 2340 USCF player, and she took around 30 minutes to reach this point in the analysis after covering all the branches. As usual, she didn't move the pieces while analysing) 43.♔g2. Until this point, Black's checks were more or less forced, but now Black has a choice: 43...♕d2+ (43...♕d5+ 44.♔f2 ♕d2+ 45.♖e2+ and finally the checks are over, along with any hope whatsoever he might have had) 44.♔h3! ♕xe3 45.♕d8+ ♔g7 46.♕d7+ ♔f6 47.♕xa4 (with this clever tactic, White wins back the rook, remaining with a few extra pawns) 47...♕e6+ (47...♕h6+ 48.♕h4+) 48.♕g4+-. The 2340 player took another 2 minutes to reach this point;

D2) 35...♗xf6? 36.♖xf6 ♖xf6 37.♕xf6 ♕d5+ 38.♔g1 ♕c5+ 39.♔g2 ♕d5+ 40.♔f2 ♕c5+ 41.♖e3 transposes to line D1;

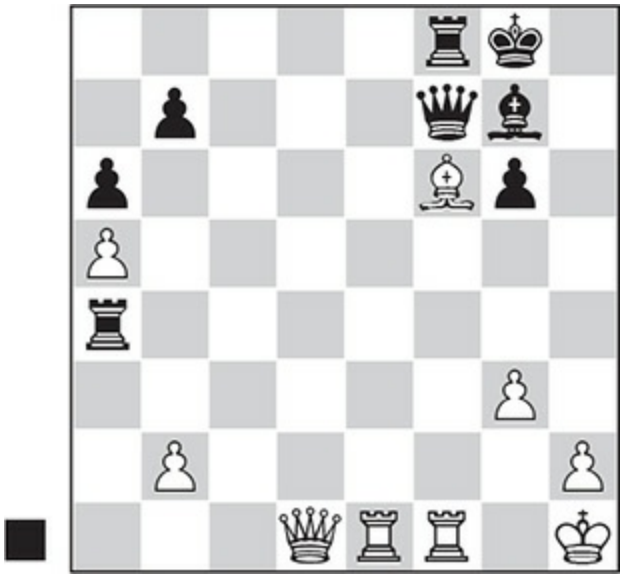
D3) 35...♗f8? 36.h4!+- (36.♖c1? ♕d5+ 37.♔g1 ♖xa5=);

D4) 35...♖b4? 36.♕e6 ♕xe6 37.♖xe6 ♖xb2 38.♗xb2 ♖xf1+ 39.♔g2 ♖b1 40.♗xg7 ♔xg7 41.h4+-;

D5) 35...♔h7! (this could be a tough move to find for many) 36.♖f2 ♗xf6 37.♖xf6 ♕d5+ 38.♔g1 ♖xf6 39.♕xf6 ♕c5+ 40.♔g2 ♕d5+

41.♔f2 ♕c5+ 42.♖e3 ♕c2+ 43.♔f3 ♕d1+ 44.♔f2 (44.♔g2 ♕d2+) 44...♕c2+ 45.♖e2 ♕c5+=.

33...♕f7 34.♕d1!?



TASK 4: *There are two ways for Black to save the game; find both and analyse them as deeply as possible. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

34...♖a1!

34...♕c4! 35.♗xg7 ♖xf1+ 36.♖xf1 ♔xg7 37.♕d7+ ♔h6=. Despite being a pawn down, White is unable to get his act together for more. But it is also difficult for Black to understand White's practical problems in the resulting position and confidently go into this line. This means Black should come up with something else.

35.♕xa1 ♕d5+ 36.♔g1 ♗xf6!

36...♕c5+? 37.♔g2 ♕d5+ 38.♖f3 ♖xf6 39.♕d1+-.

37.h4!?

An interesting attempt for White to continue playing for something.

37...♕d4+! 38.♔g2 ♕d2+ 39.♔h3

39.♖f2 ♕xf2+ 40.♔xf2 ♗xb2+=.

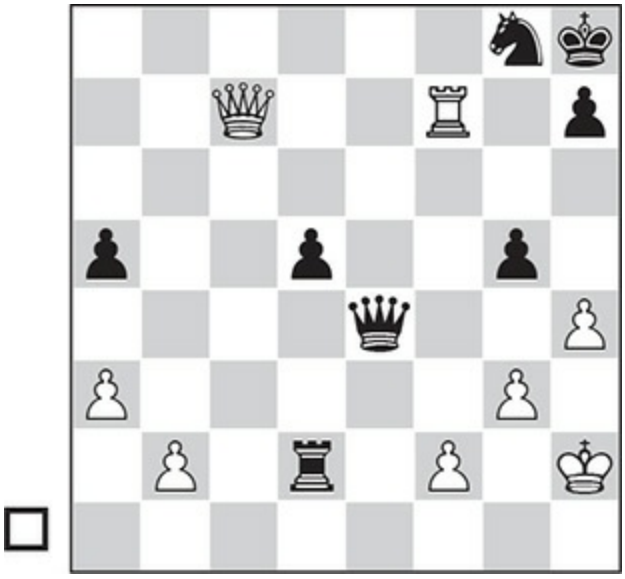
39...♕d7+ 40.♔g2 ♕d2+ 41.♔h3 ♕d7+ 42.♔h2 ♕d2+ 43.♔h3 ½-½

Game 61 Level 4

Singhania Vatsal 2157

Artur Davtyan 2418

New Delhi jr 2019



White is one of my students who is in general very good at calculation, but here he missed a very interesting resource to save the game against a higher-rated opponent.

45.hxg5?

A) 45.♕c3+!? ♕d4 46.♕xd4+ ♖xd4 47.hxg5 ♖e4! 48.♖d7 ♘e7 49.♔g2 ♔g7 50.f4 ♔f8∓;

B) 45.♖f8!!. In general I don't use the '!!' symbol easily in analysis, as it can dilute the value of some good moves by over-praising them! However, here I feel it is well-deserved, as White is a full piece down and he plays an ultra-cool move, gaining equality as a result!

B1) 45...♕d4?! gives White an easy draw with 46.♕f7 ♕g7 47.♖xg8+;

B2) 45...gxh4. Even here, White has interesting ways to make a draw – try to find both variations:

B21) 46.♖xg8+? is too early and does not work: 46...♔xg8 47.♕d8+ ♔f7 48.♕d7+ ♕e7 49.♕f5+ ♕f6 50.♕d7+ ♔g6 51.♕g4+ ♔h6-+;

B22) 46.♕c3+? ♕d4-+;

B23) 46.♕c8? hxg3+-+;

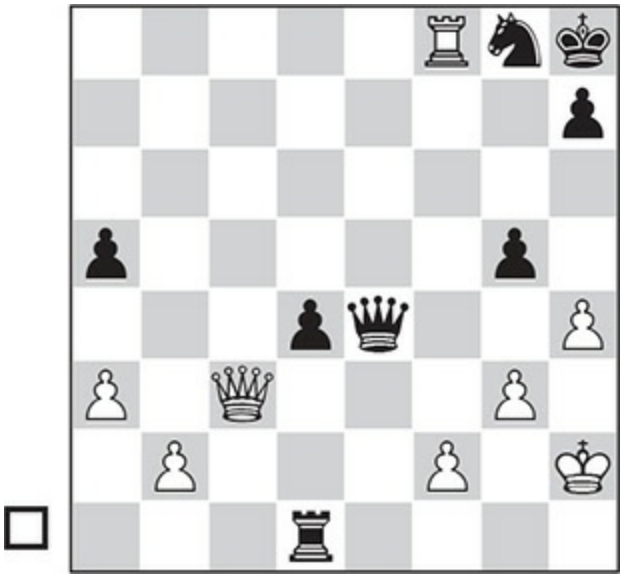
B24) 46.♕f7! hxg3+ 47.♔h3! (this is the point) 47...♕h1+ 48.♔g4!

(48.♔xg3? ♖d3+ 49.f3 ♕g1+ 50.♔h3 – now White is threatening with the familiar ♖g8-♕f6 draw; hence, Black has to play the prophylactic 50...h6!, and without perpetual check, White should lose this) 48...♕d1+ (48...♖d4+ 49.f4 ♕d1+ 50.♔h4 transposes) 49.♔h4 ♖d4+ 50.f4 ♕h1+ 51.♔g4 ♕d1+ and Black has nothing more than a draw. It is a very useful skill to learn how to effectively walk out of checks, or how to avoid trouble in situations with a series of checks in major- piece endings like this. It will help in many games if we are good at this;

B25) 46.♕b8! is the other way to make a draw, setting up the ♖g8-♕e5 perpetual check: 46...hxg3+ 47.♕xg3 ♕g6 (the only move; 47...♕e6? 48.♕c3++-) 48.♕c3+ ♕g7 49.♖xg8+ ♔xg8 50.♕xd2, with an easy draw.

B3) 45...♖d1. Now White should exploit the hanging nature of this rook with accurate calculation:
46.♕c3+! (46.f3?? ♖d2+ 47.♔h3 g4+ is checkmate) and now:

B31) 46...d4 is one of the critical lines that needs to be calculated accurately, but should not be very difficult at this level:



analysis diagram

47.♖xg8+! ♔xg8 48.♕b3+ ♔h8 49.♕xd1 should be an easy draw (49.♕b8+?? ♔g7-+);

B32) 46...♖d4. White has a forced draw even here: 47.♕c8, forcing

Black to play 47...♕g6 48.♖xg8+! ♕xg8 49.♕c3 ♕g7 50.♕c8+±;

B33) 46...♕d4 47.♕c8! (47.♖xg8+?? is too hasty and done without preparation: 47...♔xg8 48.♕c8+ ♔f7 49.♕d7+ ♔g6 and White will soon run out of checks and lose the game) 47...♕g7 48.♖xg8+!. A very concrete solution to the problem White faces. When we are slightly worse or when we are defending an inferior position, it makes sense to force things and put a clear and immediate end to the misery, rather than prolonging the defensive job for long. When we drift away by avoiding forcing continuations, it will set up the game for future mistakes, since it is an indication that we are not willing to put in the effort and calculate things objectively and are satisfied with playing obvious-looking moves. 48...♕xg8. Now White has two interesting and instructive ways to make a draw:

B331) 49.♕c2! is a clever way to make the draw. It lures the rook away from providing protection to the d4-pawn when White plays ♕c3 check on the next move: 49...♖d4 (49...♖f1 50.♕c3+ ♕g7 51.♕c8+=) 50.♕c3 ♕g7 51.♕c8+=;

B332) 49.♕c3+ d4 50.♕f3!= *(50.♕c2 ♖e1)*, threatening to take the rook or give perpetual check with 51.♕f6+, which cannot be parried both.

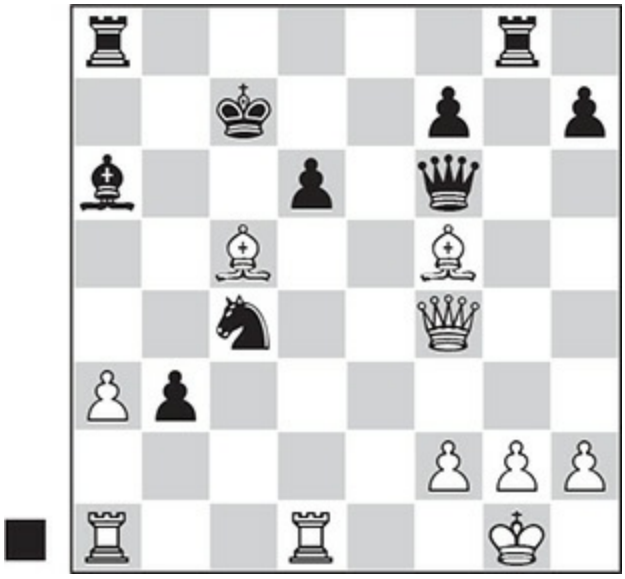
45...♖d1 46.f3 ♕e2+ 47.♔h3 ♖h1+ 48.♔g4 ♕xb2

Black should be winning here, but the game eventually ended in a draw after mutual mistakes by both players.

Game 62 Level 4

Marat Dzhumaev	2495
Rinat Jumabayev	2557

Voronezh 2010 (7)



TASK 1: *Time to think: 10 minutes.*

24...b2!

While seeing the 24...♖g5 variation, we should realise that including 24...b2 will be to Black's advantage.

A) 24...♖g5?? is a careless blunder that was played in the game, and White soon won: 25.♗xd6+! ♘xd6 26.♖xd6 (26.♖ac1+ also wins) 26...♕xf5 27.♖c1+ (when we saw this move here, we should have realised that with the pawn on b2, this check would not have been possible. Hence, could I have gotten this same position by including ...b3-b2 earlier? It is very important to learn proper lessons from the analysis we do. Many times, it will reveal important details) 27...♔b7 28.♕e3! (probably Black missed this when he went 24...♖g5, but even so the position looks dangerous enough to not venture into it) 28...♕a5 29.♖d7++-;

B) Black can also begin with 24...♖xg2+!, but he should include the critical move eventually, transposing into the variations in the main line: 25.♔xg2 ♖g8+ 26.♔h3 (26.♔h1 ♗b7+ 27.f3 b2! 28.♖ab1 ♕e5! will transpose to the main line) 26...b2! 27.♖ab1, transposing.

25.♖ab1 ♖xg2+!

This move makes a lot more sense with ...b3-b2 included. Such forcing continuations should always get our attention before all else. This is

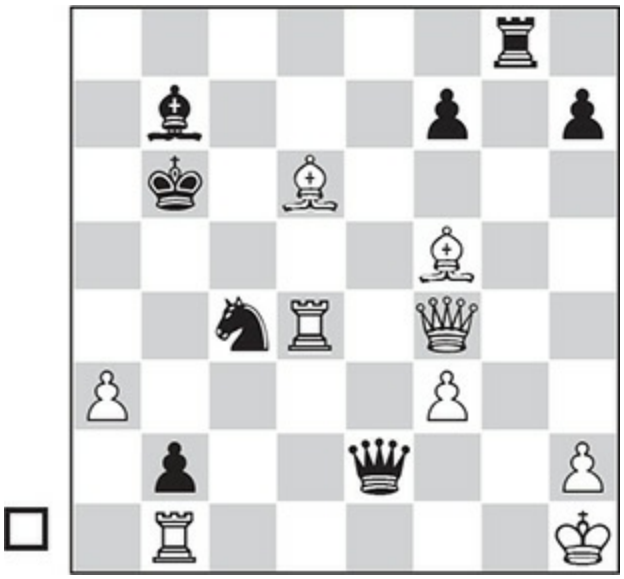
especially so when the queenside is so open, and it is only a matter of time before Black's king will come under tremendous pressure.
25...♖g5 26.♖d5 ♖e8, and the position remains highly unclear.
26.♔xg2 ♖g8+ 27.♔h3
This is not the critical continuation, and Black can equalise in multiple ways.

A) 27.♔f3? ♕c3+! 28.♗d3 ♘e5+! and White's king will be hunted down soon;

B) 27.♔h1 ♗b7+ 28.f3 ♕e5! (to distract the queen from defending the f3-pawn; 28...♕h6? 29.♗xd6+! ♘xd6 30.♖d4!, successfully beating off the attack) 29.♖d4! ♕e2! (29...dxc5? 30.♖xc4+-; 29...♕xf4?! 30.♖xf4 dxc5 31.♗xh7 ♖g7 32.♗e4 ♗xe4 33.fxe4!± ♖h7 34.♔g2):

B1) 30.♗g4!? leads to a forced draw with accurate play from both sides: 30...♖xg4! 31.♕xf7+! ♔c8! (31...♔b8? 32.♕f8+! ♔c7 33.♗xd6+ ♔b6 34.♖xb2+! ♕xb2 35.♗c5+ ♔b5 36.♖xg4+-) 32.♕f8+ ♔d7! 33.♕f7+ ends deservedly in a draw;

B2) 30.♗xd6+!? leads to incredible complications. 30...♔b6 is the only move:



analysis diagram

TASK 2: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

31.♗c5+! (to 31.♗c7+?? Black has the reply 31...♔a7, and his king reaches safety) and now:

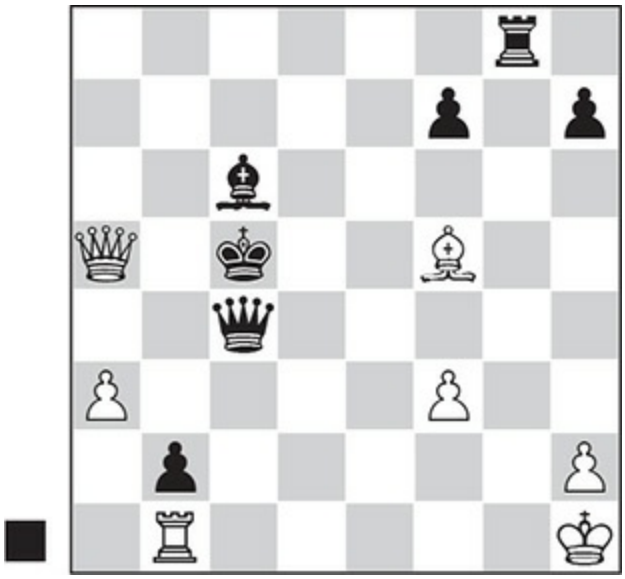
B21) 31...♔a6 32.♕d6+! (32.♖d6+? ♔a5! (32...♔b5? 33.♗d7+!+-) 33.♗b4+ (33.♗b6+ ♔a4 34.♗d7+ ♔b3-+) 33...♔a4 34.♗d7+ ♔b3 35.♗g4 ♖xg4 and mate will soon follow) 32...♘xd6 33.♗d3+ ♕xd3 34.♖xd3 ♘c4 and the balance is maintained;

B22) 31...♔b5? 32.♗d7+ ♔xc5 33.♖xc4+! ♕xc4 34.♕c7+ and White will win a lot of material;

B23) 31...♔xc5 32.♖xc4+! ♕xc4 33.♕c7+!? ♗c6 (the only move):

B231) 34.♕e7+? ♔b6 35.♖xb2+ ♔a6-+;

B232) 34.♕a5+?



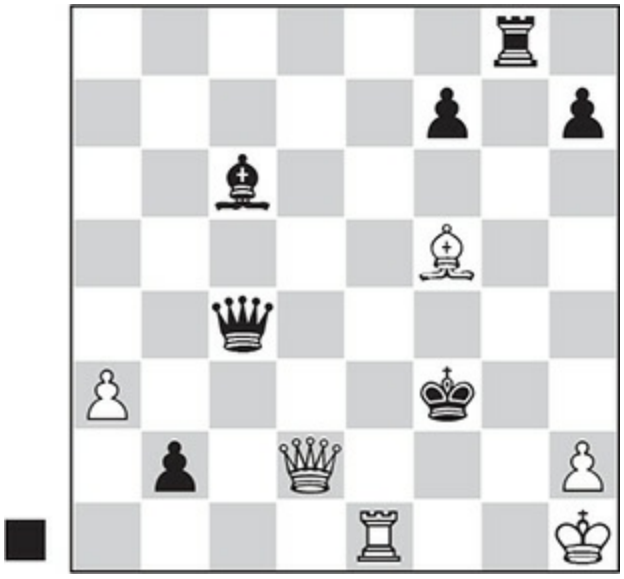
analysis diagram

TASK 3: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

B2321) 34...♔d6? 35.♖d1+! ♗d5 (35...♔e7?? loses very instructively: 36.♕e5+ ♕e6 37.♕f4!. This fantastic move is essential. It will be great if we can find these moves from the initial position! White should win easily after this, so let us see a sample variation: 37...♕f6 38.♖e1+ ♔f8 39.♕b8+ ♔g7 40.♖g1+ ♔h6 41.♕f4+ ♖g5 42.♕h4++-) 36.♗e4 b1♕! 37.♗xb1! (37.♖xb1? ♗xe4 38.♕b6+ ♗c6-+) 37...♔c6 38.♕xd5+! (this is the only

way to equalise) 38...♕xd5 39.♗e4=;

B2322) 34...♔d4! 35.♖d1+ (35.♕d2+ ♔e5-+) 35...♔e3! (in such an open position with queens on the board, Black's king directly goes after the white king!) 36.♕d2+ ♔xf3 (a strange diagonal opposition – what is stranger is that it happens in the middlegame!) 37.♖e1



analysis diagram

TASK 4: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

37...♖e8! (Black needs a safe square to move to and deliver checkmate in the process) 38.♖g1 b1♕! (38...♖e2? is too hasty, as it blocks the c4-f1 diagonal and allows 39.♖f1+ ♖f2 40.♕xf2#) 39.♖xb1 (39.♗xb1 ♖e2!-+) 39...♕e2 40.♕xe2+ ♔xe2+ 41.♔g1 ♖g8+ leads to mate;

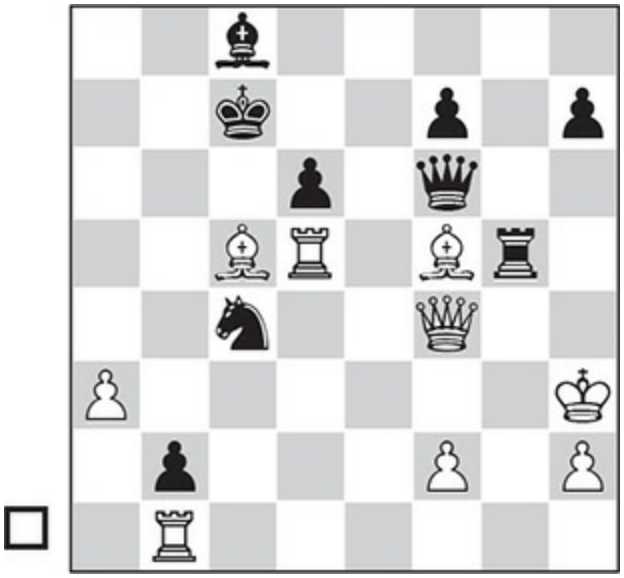
B233) 34.♕e5+ is the correct move, and the game should end in a draw soon, but the variations are very interesting here! 34...♕d5 (34...♗d5 35.♕c7+=) 35.♕e7+ ♕d6 36.♕a7+ ♔c4 37.♕a6+!=.

27...♗c8

This starts an interesting sequence.

27...♗b7 28.♗xd6+ ♘xd6 29.♕xd6+ ♕xd6 30.♖xd6 ♔xd6 31.♖xb2±.

28.♖d5! ♖g5!



Now the bishop is in trouble, but White starts his counterattack at the right time with a series of forcing moves.

TASK 5: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

29.♗xd6+! ♘xd6 30.♖c5+ ♔d8

30...♔b6 31.♖xb2+ ♔xc5 32.♕b4+ ♔d5 33.♕a5++-.

31.♖xc8+! ♘xc8 32.♖d1+ ♔e7 33.♕c7+

33.♕b4+ ♘d6; 33.♕e4+ ♔f8.

33...♔f8! 34.♕xc8+

34.♕d8+ ♕xd8 35.♖xd8+ ♔e7.

34...♔g7

Now the black king has reached the safety of the kingside. The presence of the b2-pawn and the weakened position of the white king ensure Black sufficient counterplay to maintain the balance.

35.♗g4! h5 36.♗e2

Finally, we reach a position that is dynamically equal despite the material imbalance. A sample of variations can throw light on it:

36...♕xf2 37.♕c3+! f6!

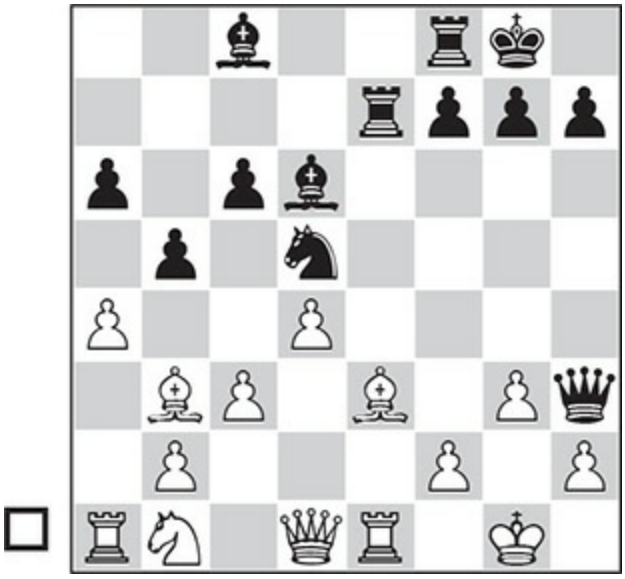
37...♔h7? 38.♕f3+-.

38.♕f3 ♕a7!=

38...♕b6 39.♖d7+ ♔h6 40.♕e4!+-.

Game 63 Level 5

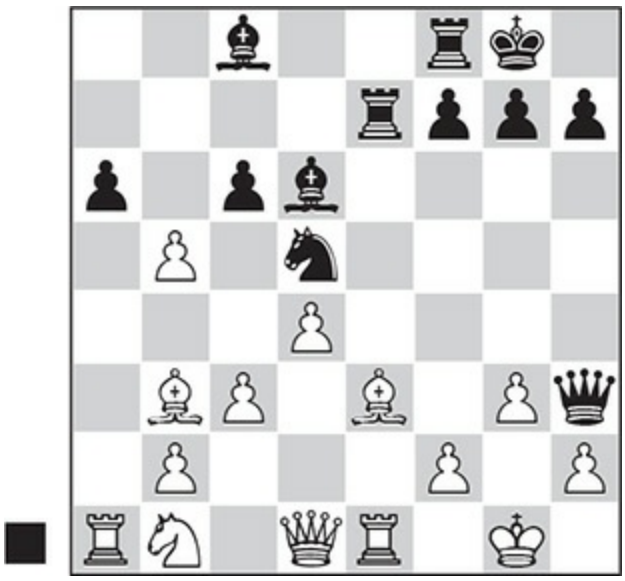
Crazy complications!



This position, clearly from a Marshall Attack, arose in a home analysis made by my strong student Vaishali, the elder sister of GM Praggnanandhaa. Most of this analysis was done by her.

17.axb5?

This natural move turns out to be a mistake. After the simple and straightforward 17.♗xd5 cxd5 18.♕f3 bxa4 19.♖xa4 ♖fe8 20.♘d2 h5, the position would have remained dynamically balanced, as it happens so often in extremely complex positions these days. Before the arrival of powerful computers, complex positions were sufficient to create a positive result for either player. Human players inevitably made mistakes in complex positions, missing some detail or other. But these days, when two strong players play, they avoid most of the minefields in complex situations, and peace is the outcome. Human calculation and defensive and opening skills were affected very positively by the arrival of computers in chess.



TASK 1: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

17...♗xg3??

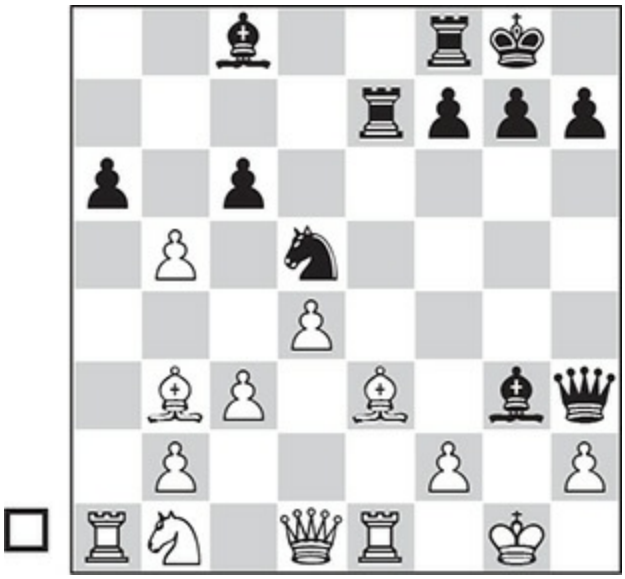
This is a very interesting but bad move, missing a simple win. Black just went for the correct idea without worrying too much about the move order. When I used this position for training, a 2600+ GM made the same mistake too. It just goes to show that we should pay a lot of attention to implementation and should not be carried away by our intelligent ideas.

A) 17...♘xe3! would have given Black a winning advantage without much difficulty: 18.♖xe3 (18.fxe3 ♗xg3 19.hxg3 ♕xg3+ 20.♔h1 ♖e4-+) 18...♖xe3 19.fxe3 ♗xg3 20.♕e2 ♗h4!-+ (not an easy move to find; 20...♖e8? 21.♗xf7+! ♔xf7 22.♕f3+ ♔g8 23.♕xg3=);

B) 17...♖xe3!? is sufficient to meet our objectives:

B1) 18.fxe3?! ♗xg3! 19.♖e2 (19.♕d2 ♗xe1 20.♕xe1 ♘xe3 and with equal material and an exposed white king, Black's attack will be unstoppable) 19...♘xe3! 20.♕c1 ♗xh2+! 21.♖xh2 ♕g3+ 22.♔h1 ♕f3+ 23.♔g1 ♗h3 (throwing everything at the white king without losing time) 24.♕e1 ♕g4+ both 25.♔f2 (after 25.♔h1, White king's can easily be lured out into the open with 25...♗g2+ 26.♔g1 ♗d5+ 27.♔f2 ♕f4+ 28.♔e2 ♖e8-+) 25...♕f4+ 26.♔g1 ♕g5+ 27.♔f2 ♘g4+! 28.♔g3 ♘e5+ 29.♔f2 ♕f4+, with checkmate soon;

B2) 18.♗xd5 offers better resistance, but after 18...♖xe1+ 19.♕xe1 cxd5, despite the advanced a6-pawn, Black should win this without many problems.
However, our main analysis will start from 17...♗xg3??.

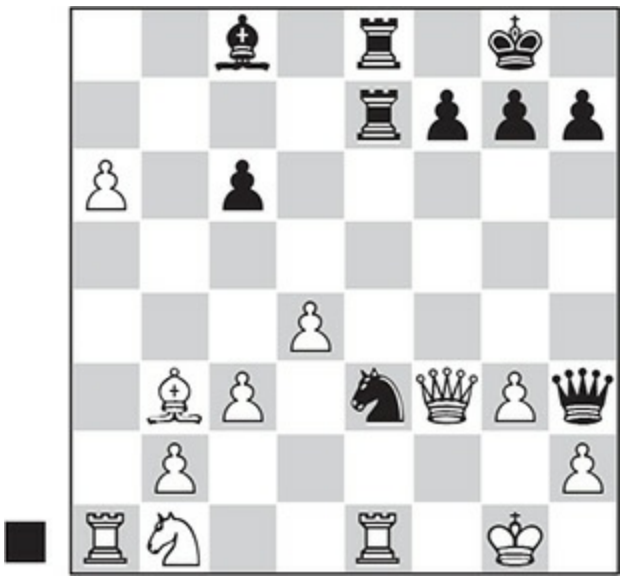


TASK 2: *Try to analyse as much as possible with the support of a helper and without moving pieces. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

18.fxg3!
This is the starting point for some fantastic positions.
18.hxg3? would have returned the favour immediately after 18...♗g4, threatening to play ...♗f3 if the white queen moves: 19.♗xd5!? cxd5! (White loses lots of material to avoid checkmate; 19...♗xd1? is too greedy an approach to the position: 20.♗g2 ♕h5 21.♘d2 ♖xe3! and due to this detail (21...♗g4 22.bxa6+-) White comes out only marginally better with 22.fxe3 ♗c2 23.bxc6 ♕g5±) 20.♕xg4 ♕xg4 21.bxa6 and Black should win this eventually.
18...♘xe3
The position is extremely complex, and each move has its weight in gold.
19.♕d2!
White is playing for a win.
19.♕f3?! looks natural (19.♕e2? loses immediately to 19...♘g4), as it

brings the queen to the defence of the kingside, puts pressure on f7 and also enables the white knight to develop on the central d2-square. But it has its drawbacks, as will be apparent soon. 19...♖fe8 is a calm improving move before embarking on concrete actions. Black ignores the queenside tensions and focusses on his strong area. Sometimes, it is very important to consciously lose the game on one side of the board to win critical time on the side where we are strong. Now:

A) The refutation of the greedy 20.bxa6? is not so easy to find.



analysis diagram

TASK 3: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

A1) The hasty 20...♘g4?? loses to the simple 21.♕xf7+! ♖xf7 22.♖xe8#;

A2) 20...♔h8!. Such quiet, not-so-obvious, prophylactic moves are hard to find in very complex positions where our first impulse will be to go for direct threats. Black should remove the knight from e3 to take advantage of the control over the central e-file. But we are not able to do it directly.

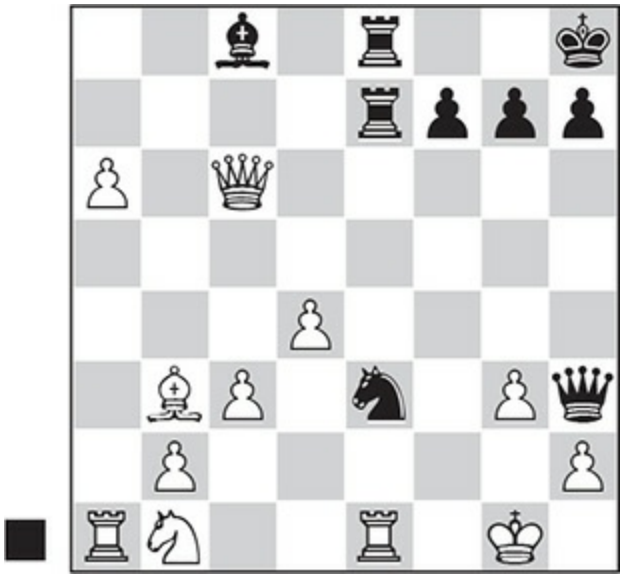
A21) The natural-looking 21.♘d2? loses on the spot to 21...♘g4!, attacking both h2 and the rook;

A22) 21.♖a5? ♘g4! 22.♖ae5 (22.♖xe7 ♕xh2+ 23.♔f1 ♖xe7-+) puts

up some kind of defence, but should also lose against correct play: 22...♕xh2+ 23.♔f1. Now Black should bring his bishop to h3 by the simple 23...♘xe5 24.♖xe5 ♗h3+ 25.♔e1 ♖xe5+ 26.dxe5 ♖xe5+ 27.♔d1 ♕g1+ 28.♔c2 ♗f5+-+;

A23) If 21.a7? ♘g4 22.♖xe7 ♖xe7 23.a8♕ ♖e1+ is a simple way to win (23...♕xh2+ 24.♔f1 ♕h3+! 25.♕g2 ♘e3+-+);

A24) 21.♕xc6!? prevents 21...♘g4 with a devilish trap:



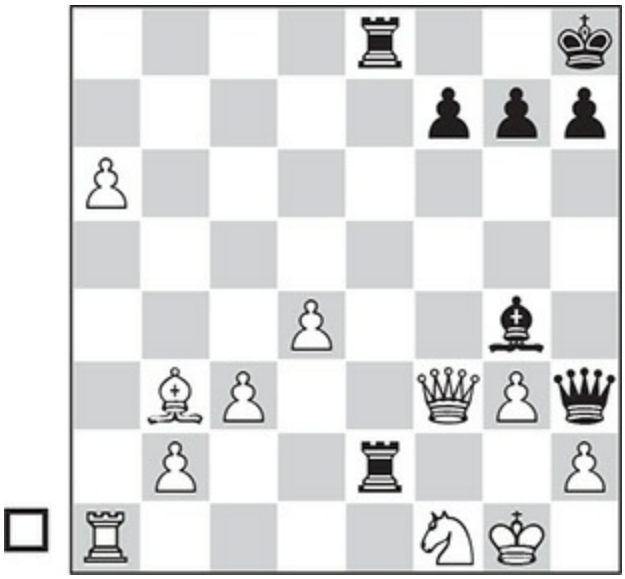
analysis diagram

TASK 4: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

A241) 21...♘g4?? 22.♕xe8+ is the point;

A242) If Black tries to cut White's queen off from the kingside with 21...♖e4?, it will backfire badly when White goes on the counter-offensive with 22.♖xe3! ♖xe3 23.♘d2 ♖e2 24.♘f1 (this defends against all the direct threats and plans to advance the a-pawn) 24...♗d7 (24...♖8e4 25.♕xe4! ♖xe4 26.a7+-; if 24...♕f5, simply 25.a7!+-) 25.♕f3! (25.♕d5 ♗e6 26.♕f3 ♗g4 transposes to the ♕f3 lines; 25.♕b7?! ♕f5! 26.a7! h6! 27.a8♕ ♕f2+ 28.♔h1 ♖xa8 29.♕xa8+ ♔h7 (threatening 30...♗h3) 30.♗c4! is the only way to keep the balance: 30...♖xb2∞; Black has excellent compensation in the form of a safer king and active pieces. The

direct 25.♕h1? allows 25...♕f5!) 25...♗g4



analysis diagram

TASK 5: *Time to think: 3 minutes.*

26.♕h1!+–. White manages to defend against all the immediate threats on this strange square. The a-pawn should play a decisive role soon. Black's attack comes to a stop;

A243) 21...♗d7! protects the rook on e8 and re-establishes the threat of 22...♘g4: 22.♕h1 (22.♕f3 ♘g4-+) 22...♘d1! (cutting off the queenside pieces from coming to the defence of the white king) 23.♖xe7 ♖xe7, and there is no good way to stop ...♖e1 on the next move.

B) 20.♘d2!. This non-greedy, development first move is the strongest in the position: 20...cxb5 (to get the bishop to the b7-square) and now:

B1) 21.♘f1?! ♗b7 22.d5 (with this move, White not only blocks the a8-h1 diagonal for Black but also the a2-g8 diagonal for his own bishop. Now Black has to choose the correct square for his knight, which will decide if he can fight for the advantage or not; 22.♕f2?! ♘c4! 23.♖xe7 ♖xe7 24.♗xc4 bxc4∓ as Black's light-coloured bishop is much superior to the white knight) 22...♘g4!∓ (this is the right path) 23.♖xe7 ♖xe7 24.♖d1 ♘f6! 25.♘e3 ♕d7!∓. In the last few moves, the black pieces have moved backwards to

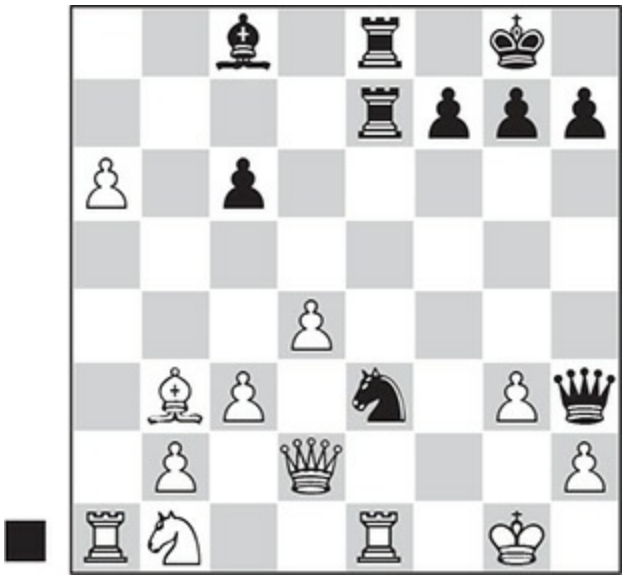
consolidate the centre. White's d5-pawn is pinned and if it moves forward, the a8-h1 diagonal will be severely weakened;

B2) 21.♕f2 ♗b7 22.♖xe3!? ♖xe3 23.♗xf7+ ♔h8 24.♗xe8 ♖xe8 25.♖f1 h6 retains the balance.

19...♖fe8 20.bxa6!

This poses the maximum problems for Black who has to play some amazing moves to have any chances of survival.

20.♘a3, preferring development over winning pawns, is the best strategy in most cases, but here, it allows Black to equalise with minimal effort: 20...cxb5 21.♘c2 ♘xc2 22.♖xe7 ♖xe7 23.♗xc2 ♗b7=.



TASK 6: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

20...h5!

This move avoids back-rank mates and also brings one more unit into the attack. Black has no time to cry over the advancing a-pawn.

A) If Black plays 20...♘g4? because with the queen on d2 White does not have the ♕xf7+ trick, he should also be aware that with the white queen on the f2-square, this move will come with a double attack on the queen and the rook on e1. However, with White's queen on d2, this move comes with less power: 21.♖xe7 ♖xe7 22.♘a3 (22.a7? ♘xh2!, exploiting the overloaded white queen: 23.a8♕ ♘f3+ 24.♔f2 ♘xd2 25.♘xd2 ♕h2+ 26.♔f1 ♖e8-+,

threatening 27...♗h3) 22...♗xa6 23.♘c4+-. White manages to beat off the attack and retains an extra pawn

B) 20...♘f1? is a clever-looking move that falls short due to 21.♖xe7 ♖xe7 22.♕g2+-.

21.a7!

White does not want to take the 'path of Ahimsa' and wants an all-out fight! 21.♘a3 ♗xa6 (21...h4? 22.♘c4 ♘xc4 23.♗xc4 hxg3 24.♖xe7 ♖xe7 25.a7+-) 22.♘c2 is the most logical continuation if White fears Black's threats! The strong move 22...♗c4! maintains the balance: 23.♗xc4 ♘xc4=.

21...h4!

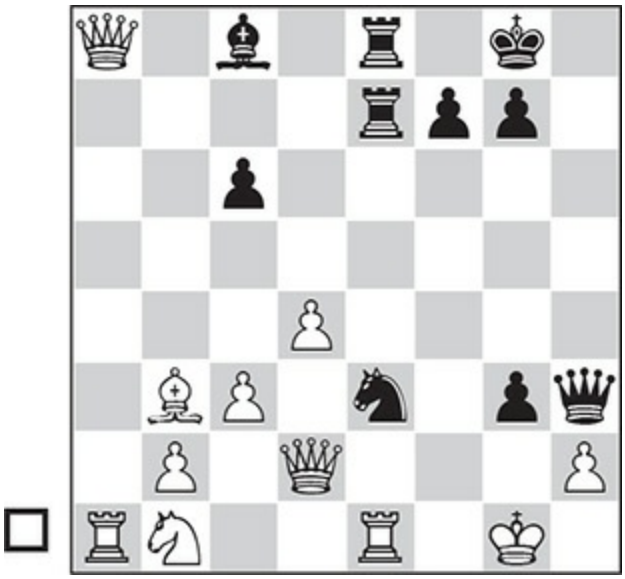
This pawn looks so far from promotion when compared to White's rook pawn on the queenside, doesn't it? But obviously, that is not the point of this advance! Now comes an interesting phase of the game, a battle of extra material versus an all-out attack.

21...♗b7?? 22.a8♕ ♗xa8 23.♖xa8 ♖xa8 24.♖xe3+-.

22.a8♕

Both players obviously do not believe in Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence!

22...hxg3



It is still not apparent what Black's immediate threat is.

TASK 7: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

23.♕xc6!

Bringing the queen closer to the scene of action.

A) 23.♖a7!? and now:

A1) 23...gxh2+! is the simplest way to draw and does not require much effort from White: 24.♕xh2 ♕g4+ 25.♔h1 ♕f3+ 26.♔g1 ♕g4+ 27.♔h1= (not 27.♔f2?? ♘d1+ 28.♗xd1 ♕f5+ 29.♗f3 ♖xe1 and Black's attack crashes through first);

A2) 23...♘f1? is refuted in a nice manner: 24.♖xf1 ♖e2 25.♗xf7+ ♔h8 (25...♔h7 26.♗g6+! ♔xg6 27.♕xc6++-) 26.♕xe2 ♖xe2 27.♕xc8+! ♕xc8 28.♗g6! gxh2+ 29.♔h1+-. Both kings are exposed now, but the h2-pawn provides an umbrella shelter to the white king from a frontal attack, and it won't be easy for Black to get a check along the a8-h1 diagonal. In contrast, White has serious threats like doubling the rooks on the f-file, apart from his material superiority;

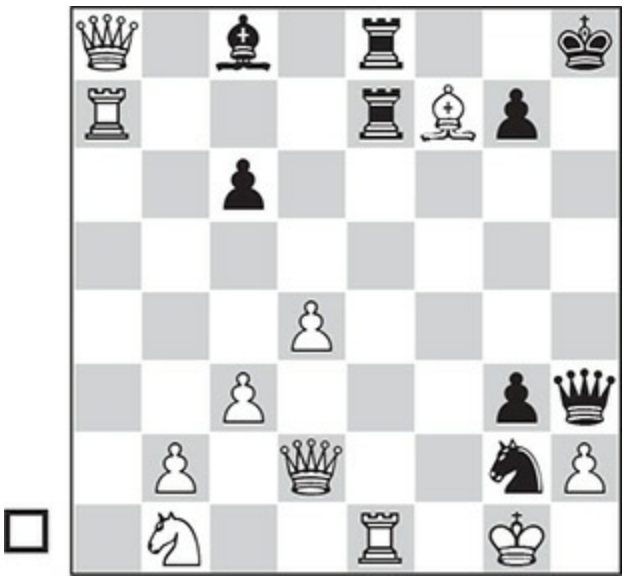
A3) 23...♘g2! is not obvious at all, and demands very accurate play from White to keep the balance:

A31) 24.♖exe7? loses without a fight: 24...♕xh2+ 25.♔f1 ♕h1+ 26.♔e2 ♗g4+ 27.♔d3 ♕f1+ 28.♔c2 ♗f5+-+. This 28...♗f5+ move is not possible with White's rook on a5, as in the 23.♕b8 line that we will see later;

A32) 24.♖axe7? also loses without a fight: 24...♕xh2+ 25.♔f1 ♘e3+ 26.♖1xe3 ♗h3+ 27.♔e1 ♕g1+ 28.♔e2 ♕f1#;

A33) 24.♗xf7+! is a nice counter-shot. Basically, this clears the b3-square for our king!

A331) 24...♔h8?, trying to hide in the corner, does not work due to a minor technicality.



analysis diagram

TASK 8: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

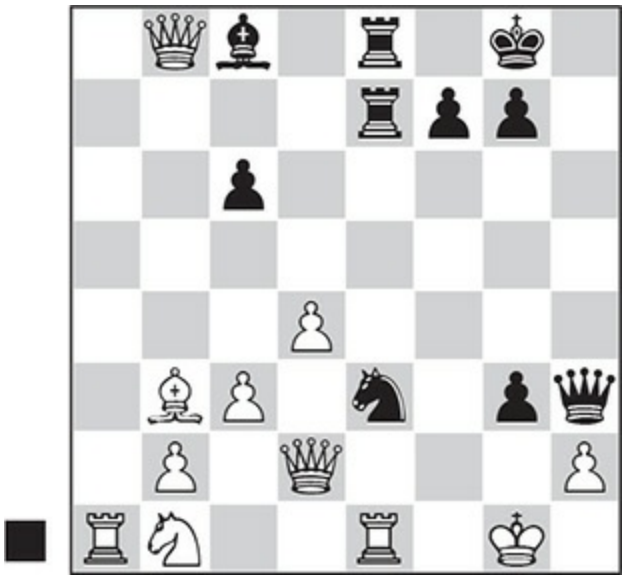
25.♖exe7! ♕xh2+ 26.♔f1 ♘e3+ (26...♕h1+ 27.♔e2 ♗g4+ 28.♔d3 ♕f1+ 29.♔c2 ♗f5+ 30.♔b3+-; if White took on e7 before playing 24.♗f7, this square would not have been available for the white king!) 27.♕xe3! g2+ (27...♕h1+ 28.♕g1! ♕f3+ 29.♔e1+-) 28.♔e1 g1♕+ 29.♕xg1 ♕xg1+ 30.♔d2 ♕g5+ 31.♔c2 ♗f5+ 32.♔b3 ♖xa8 33.♖xa8++-. If Black's king were on f8, Black would have 33...♔e7 here;

A332) 24...♔h7 25.♗g6+! ♔h8 26.♖exe7 ♕xh2+ 27.♔f1 ♘e3+ 28.♕xe3 g2+ 29.♔e1 g1♕+ 30.♕xg1 ♕xg1+ 31.♔d2 ♕g5+ 32.♔c2! ♕xg6+ 33.♔b3 ♗e6+ 34.♔a3 ♖xa8 35.♖xa8+ ♔h7 36.♘d2 with the idea of ♖aa7 and ♖g7, winning easily;

A333) 24...♔f8! (accurate and alert play!) 25.♖exe7! ♕xh2+ 26.♔f1 ♘e3+! 27.♕xe3 g2+ 28.♔e1 g1♕+ 29.♕xg1 ♕xg1+ 30.♔d2 ♕g5+ and White is forced to agree to a draw with 31.♔e1 (31.♔c2? ♗f5+ 32.♔b3 ♖xa8-+; unfortunately, White is not able to take on a8, as his other rook will be hanging on e7!) 31...♕g1+=.

B) 23.♕b8? looks to be winning easily for White, as the extra queen comes to the defence of the white king and it is all over, but looks can be

deceptive at times...



analysis diagram

TASK 9: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

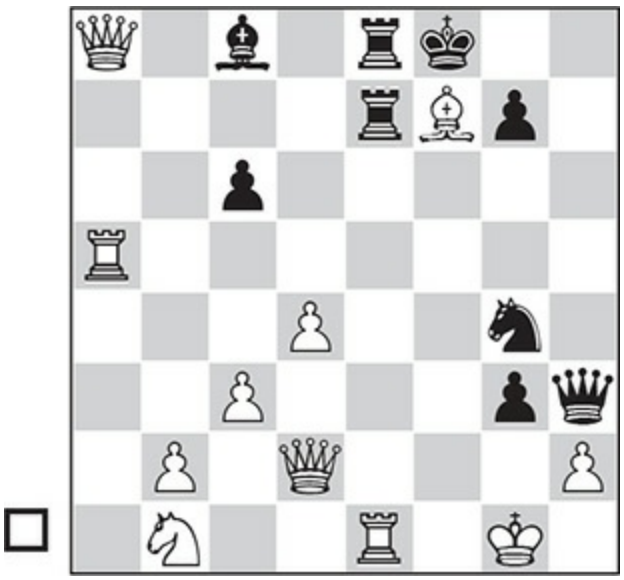
23...♘g2!! (blocking the second-rank defence for the h2-pawn and also attacking the rook on e1) 24.♗xf7+ (24.♖xe7 ♕xh2+ 25.♔f1 ♕h1+ 26.♔e2 ♗g4+ 27.♔d3 ♕f1+ 28.♔c2 ♗f5+-+; with the white bishop on b3, White's king is not able to run to the queenside, as was seen earlier) 24...♔f8 25.♖xe7 ♕xh2+ 26.♔f1 ♕h1+ 27.♔e2 ♗g4+ 28.♔d3 ♕f1+ 29.♔c2 ♗f5+ 30.♔b3 ♖xb8+-+. The queen falls with check.

C) 23.♖a5!? aims to prevent the ...♗f5 check, as happened in some lines when the white king runs to the c2-square.

C1) Here, 23...♘g2? does not work: 24.♖xe7 ♕xh2+ 25.♔f1 ♕h1+ (25...♘e3+ 26.♕xe3 g2+ 27.♔e1 g1♕+ 28.♕xg1 ♕xg1+ 29.♔d2. Here, because of 23.♖a5, there is no ...♕g5+ available for Black. White's king escapes easily from the other checks by the black queen: 29...♕f2+ 30.♔c1 ♕g1+ (30...♕f4+ 31.♘d2+-) 31.♗d1+-) 26.♔e2 ♗g4+ 27.♔d3 ♕f1+ 28.♔c2+-. There is no bishop check on the f5-square for Black;

C2) 23...♘g4!? 24.♗xf7+ (this counter-attacking mechanism is familiar by now; after 24.♖ae5, Black has many ways to make a draw, e.g.

24...♘f2!? 25.♗xf7+ ♔f8 26.♗d5! ♕xh2+ 27.♔f1 ♗h3+ 28.♔e2 ♖xe5+ 29.dxe5 ♗g4+ 30.♔f1 ♗h3+=) 24...♔f8! (24...♔xf7?? 25.♖xe7+ ♖xe7 26.♕f4+! (26.♕xc8?? gxh2+-+) 26...♔g6 27.♕xc6++-)



analysis diagram

TASK 10: *White has two good ways to hold the balance here, and they require a high level of accuracy from both players. Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

C21) 25.♖ae5! and now:

C211) 25...♘xh2? 26.♕xc6+-;

C212) 25...gxh2+? 26.♔h1 ♘xe5 (26...♕f3+ 27.♕g2+-) 27.♗xe8! ♘f3 28.♗d7!+-. GM Karthikeyan Murali found this;

C213) 25...♘xe5 26.♖xe5 ♖xf7 27.♖xe8+ ♔xe8 28.♕e1+ ♔f8 29.hxg3!+-, also found by GM Karthikeyan Murali;

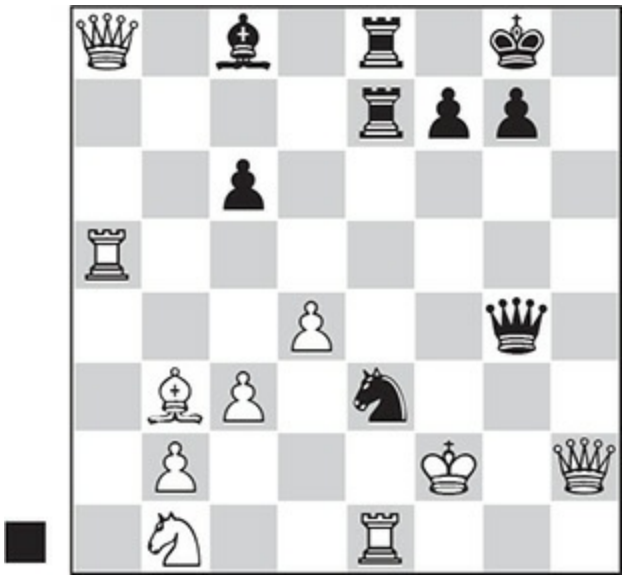
C214) 25...♘f2!. Since White cannot give any checks immediately, Black uses this time to create threats of his own. Try to find White's only move here.

26.♗d5! is not an easy move at all, covering the critical h1-square from the black queen. WGM and IM Bhakti Kulkarni found this resource! 26...♕xh2+ 27.♔f1. We can see the usefulness of 26.♗d5! here. It prevents both ...♕h1

check and the g-pawn advance. Black is forced to take a draw with 27...♗h3+ 28.♔e2 ♗g4+ 29.♔f1=.

C22) 25.♗e6! is the other clever idea for White, neutralising the pressure along the e-file. GM Karthikeyan Murali found both these clever moves for White while training. 25...gxh2+ 26.♔h1 ♗xe6! (threatening both the white queen and to give check along the a8-h1 diagonal, exploiting the hanging nature of the ♖e1) 27.♕f4+! (27.♕g2? does not work: 27...♕xg2+ 28.♔xg2 ♗d5+ 29.♖xd5 ♖xe1 30.♖f5+ ♔g8-+) 27...♘f6! (still retaining all the threats mentioned above; 27...♔g8? 28.♕xc6+-) 28.♕xe8+ ♖xe8=. When Black gives ...♗d5 check later, White can give back the exchange and get a playable position, keeping the balance intact.

C3) 23...gxh2+ 24.♕xh2 ♕g4+ 25.♔f2.



analysis diagram

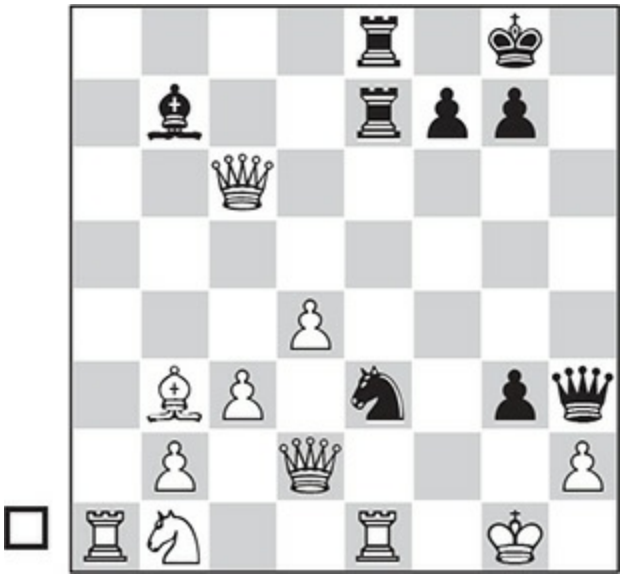
TASK 11: *Black can still maintain the balance with accurate play. Time to think: 3 minutes.*

25...♕e4!, threatening to play ...♘g4 on the next move. Here, 26.♖e5!? is a clever way to play for a win (26.♔g1 ♕g4+ 27.♔f2 ♕e4=) but...
26...♘g4+! (if Black gets tempted to win material with 26...♖xe5?, it will backfire: 27.♕xe5! ♖xe5 (27...♘g4+ 28.♔g3 ♕d3+ 29.♖e3! and Black

runs out of checks) 28.♕xc8+ ♖e8 (28...♔h7 29.♕h3+ ♔g8 30.♖xe3+-) 29.♕xe8+! ♕xe8 30.♖xe3 and White has too much material for the queen) 27.♔g3! ♕d3+! 28.♔g2! (White has to play accurately to keep the balance; 28.♖1e3? ♕xe3+ 29.♖xe3 ♖xe3+ 30.♔f4 ♘xh2 and White's king will be hunted down shortly) 28...♘xh2 (28...♖xe5 29.♖xe5 ♘xe5 30.dxe5 ♕e2+ ends in perpetual check) 29.♗xf7+! (the only move to keep the balance) 29...♔f8!? (29...♔xf7 30.♖xe7+ ♖xe7 31.♖xe7+ ♔xe7 32.♕xc8=) 30.♗xe8! ♖xe5 31.♖xe5 ♕h3+ 32.♔g1 and Black has to take a draw with checks.

23...♗b7!

23...gxh2+? 24.♕xh2 ♕g4+ 25.♔h1 ♗b7 26.♕xb7 ♖xb7 27.♖xe3!.



TASK 12: *White has a wide choice of moves here and choosing the one that can put Black under tremendous pressure should be his aim. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

24.♕d6!

A) 24.♕g6? ♘g4!. Now White can try some desperado checks to try and survive somehow, but it does not work; let us see them anyway: 25.♕xf7+ ♖xf7 26.♖xe8+ ♔h7 27.♗c2+ g6 28.♗xg6+ ♔g7 29.♖g8+ ♔xg8 30.♗xf7+ ♔f8-+;

B) 24.♗e6? fxe6 25.♕xb7!? ♖xb7 26.♖xe3. It looks like White has ended up with an extra piece, but it is not over yet by any means. 26...♖f8! (Black creates fresh threats against the white king; 26...♖f7 also wins with same idea as 26...♖f8) 27.♘a3 ♖f2-+;

C) 24.♕xe8+? is another desperado which does not work: 24...♖xe8

C1) 25.♗xf7+ ♔xf7-+;

C2) 25.d5 gxh2+ 26.♕xh2 ♕g4+ 27.♔f2 ♕f5+ 28.♔g1 ♕g5+! (28...♖e4? 29.♖xe3! ♖xe3 30.♘d2=) 29.♔h1 (29.♔f2 ♘g4+) and now:

C21) 29...♗xd5+? 30.♗xd5 ♕xd5+ 31.♔g1=;

C22) 29...♖e4? 30.♖xe3 (30.♖g1? ♕f6-+) 30...♕xe3 31.♘d2=;

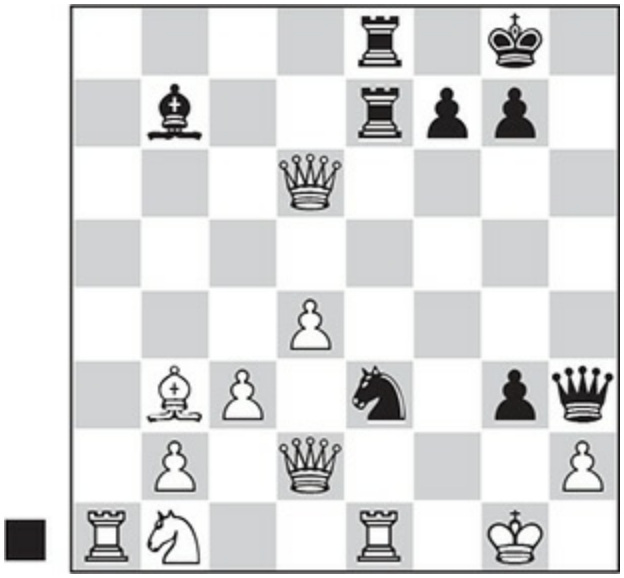
C23) 29...♖e6! 30.♖xe3 ♕xe3-+.

D) 24.♗xf7+!? is the typical sacrifice: 24...♔xf7! (24...♔f8? 25.♗xe8!? ♗xc6 26.♗xc6+-, Black has given up too much material in the excitement of the attack!; if 24...♔h8? 25.♕xb7 ♖xb7 26.♗xe8 is one way to win for White) 25.♕d6

D1) 25...♘f5? 26.♖xe7+ ♖xe7 27.♕xe7+! (when we have extra material, we should always consider giving back some or all of it to neutralise the opponent's initiative) 27...♘xe7 28.♖a7±;

D2) 25...gxh2+? 26.♕2xh2! ♕g4+ 27.♕dg3+-;

D3) 25...♖e5!. Brilliant! This brings back memories of the famous game Aronian-Anand, Wijk aan Zee 2013. The rook gives itself up to cut off the ♕c6 from the kingside: 26.dxe5 (26.♕c7+ ♖8e7 27.♕xe5 ♖xe5 28.dxe5 gxh2+ 29.♕xh2 ♕g4+=) 26...gxh2+! 27.♕xh2 ♕g4+ 28.♔f2 ♕f3+ 29.♔g1 ♕g4+=.



analysis diagram

TASK 13: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

24...♖e5!!

An amazing resource! Black threatens to take on h2 with the pawn and give check on g5 with his rook. It also blocks the white queen on d6 from coming to the defence of its kingside.

A) 24...♘g4? 25.♖xe7 ♖xe7 26.♕xg3+-;

B) 24...♘g2? 25.♖xe7 ♕xh2+ 26.♔f1 ♕h1+ 27.♔e2+-.

25.♕g6!

White does not want to settle for a draw that easily.

25.dxe5 gxh2+ 26.♕xh2 ♕g4+ 27.♔f2 ♕f3+ lets Black off the hook easily, especially when alternatives that can put some pressure on Black are available, like 25.♕g6! 28.♔g1 ♕g4+=.

25...♖f5!!

The major pieces display extreme ingenuity in these variations, offering themselves up at the slightest provocation. Black threatens 26...♖f1 checkmate.

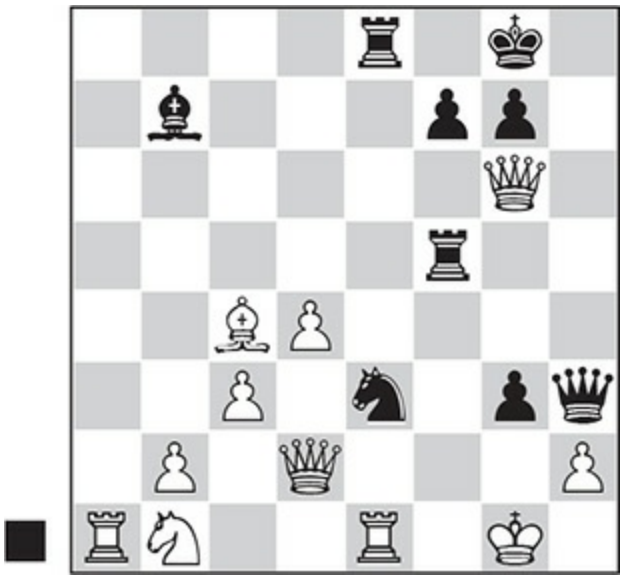
26.♕xf5

A) 26.♗xf7+? ♖xf7 27.♘a3 ♖f2 28.♕xe8+ ♔h7 29.♕d3+ ♘f5-+;

B) 26.♘a3!? ♖f2! (26...♗g2?? 27.♕xg3+-) 27.♗xf7+! (by now I hope

we have reached a stage where such moves do not even require any comment! They have become kind of standard practice) 27...♔f8! (27...♔h8 28.♕h5++-) 28.♕xg3 ♕xg3+ 29.hxg3 ♖xd2 30.♗xe8 ♖g2+ 31.♔h1 ♖xb2+ 32.♔g1 ♖g2+=;

C) 26.♗c4!? invites another round of complications! White has prevented the checkmate on f1 and is threatening to capture on g3.



analysis diagram

TASK 14: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

C1) 26...♖e6? does not do anything about White's threat: 27.♕xg3+-;

C2) 26...♖f2?? allows White to execute his main plan: 27.♕xg3 ♕xg3+ 28.hxg3 ♖xd2 29.♘xd2+-;

C3) 26...♖f3!! is a calm and quiet move, showing Black has things under control and there is no need to get overly excited.

C31) 27.♘a3?. Can you guess Black's best move here?

C311) 27...♖e6?? 28.♗xe6+-. Now the f1-square is protected, compared to the 27.♖a5 variation;

C312) 27...♖e7!! prevents losing the rook on e8 with check when the ♘e3 moves. Such moves give you goosebumps! 28.b3 ♘xc4-+.

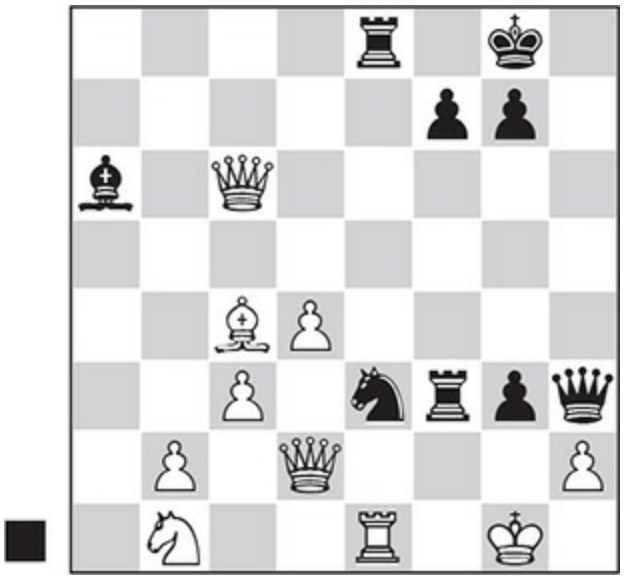
C32) 27.♖a5? ♖e6!!-+;

C33) 27.♖a7 ♖e6! 28.♗xe6?? (28.♕g5 ♖ef6-+, simply doubling the rooks with mate threatened on f1) 28...♖f1+;

C34) 27.♖a6!. One of the toughest things when writing chess books is that we are expected to comment on moves that make no sense to us while pretending they do... so let me attempt to do just that here: like a thirsty man in search of water, the rook is looking for an open file! Now that it's clear why this move 27.♖a6! was played, let us move on!

C341) 27...♖e4? (27...♕h4!-+) 28.♖d6! (like a thirsty man...!) 28...gxh2+ 29.♔h1 ♖ff4!! (this clears one rook from the a8-h1 diagonal to meet 30.♖d8+ with 30...♖e8 discovered check!) 30.♕dg2 ♕xg2+ 31.♕xg2 ♘xg2 32.♖xe4 ♗xe4 33.♘d2 ♘e3+ 34.♘xe4 ♘xc4 35.♖d8+ ♔h7 36.♖e8 ♘xb2=;

C342) 27...♗xa6 28.♕c6! (28.♕xa6 ♖f2-+), attacking both rooks and the bishop. Everything is hanging!



analysis diagram

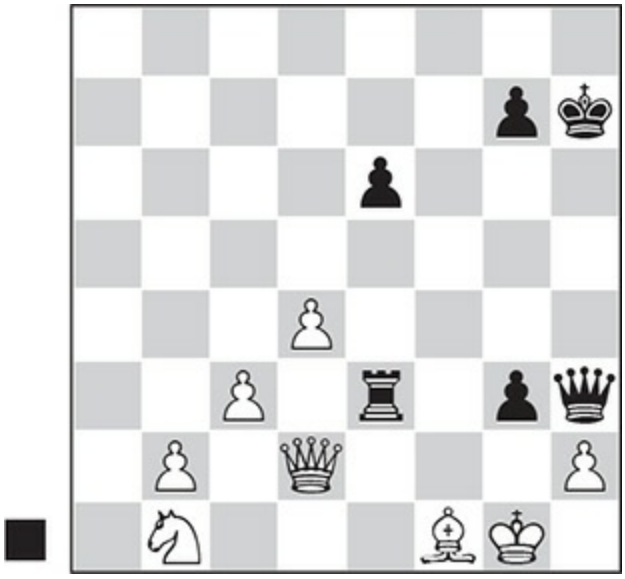
TASK 15: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

C3421) 28...gxh2+? 29.♔h1!∞;

C3422) 28...♖e7!! 29.♕a8+ (driving the black bishop back before capturing the rook on f3) 29...♗c8 (29...♔h7? 30.♕xf3 gxh2+ 31.♕xh2+-;

unfortunately, the Black queen is pinned!) 30.♕xf3 (30.♗d3 ♖f2-+) 30...gxh2+ 31.♕xh2 ♕xf3-+;

C3423) 28...♖e6! is the other crazy alternative, which is also good enough: 29.♕a8+ (29.♕xf3 gxh2+ 30.♕xh2 ♖g6+-+) 29...♗c8! (luring the queen away from its optimal placement; 29...♔h7? 30.♕xf3 gxh2+ 31.♕xh2 ♖g6+ 32.♔h1!+-) 30.♕xc8+ (30.♕xf3 gxh2+ 31.♕xh2 ♖g6+ 32.♔f2 – this position deserves a photograph with a frame! 32...♕xh2+ 33.♔xe3 ♖g3 34.♗xf7+ ♔f8-+) 30...♔h7 31.♕xe6 fxe6 32.♖xe3. Is it all over for Black? 32...♖xe3 (32...♖f2? 33.♕xf2 gxf2+ 34.♔xf2 ♕xh2+ 35.♔e1 ♕g1+ 36.♔d2 ♕xb1 37.♗d3+!+-, finally!) 33.♗f1



analysis diagram

TASK 16: *Time to think: 2 minutes.*

33...♖e1! is not a difficult move to find, but it deserves a diagram just for its beauty (the rook's journey was ...♖a8-♖a7-♖e7-♖e5-♖f5-♖f3-♖e3-♖e1 !). 34.♕d3+ ♕f5! 35.♕xf5+ exf5 36.♘d2 gxh2+ 37.♔xh2 ♖d1!-+, the culmination point.

26...♕xf5 27.hxg3

27.♖xe3 gxh2+! 28.♕xh2! ♖xe3 29.♘d2 ♖h3 (29...♕g4+ 30.♔f1) 30.♕b8+ ♔h7 31.♕xb7 ♖g3+ 32.♕g2 ♖xg2+ 33.♔xg2 ♕g5+ 34.♔f3

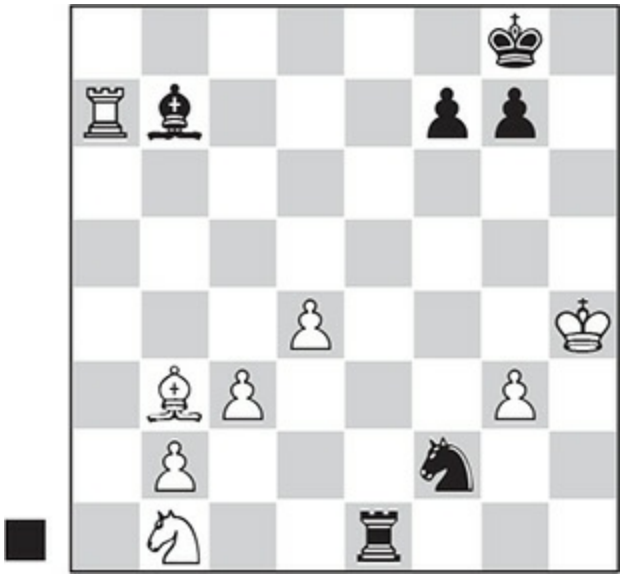
♕xd2 35.♗xf7∓.

27...♕h3!

27...♕h5? 28.d5+-; 27...♕f3? 28.♕h2+-.

28.♕h2 ♕xh2+ 29.♔xh2 ♘g4+ 30.♔h3 ♘f2+ 31.♔h2

Avoiding the draw with 31.♔h4?! is too risky, but the refutation is instructive! 31...♖xe1 32.♖a7.



analysis diagram

It appears that Black is in deep trouble, but let us not forget the white king in all the excitement! **TASK 17:** *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

32...♔h7! (the black king is rushing forward to welcome his compatriot with dangerous threats! So mean!) 33.g4 (33.♖xb7?? ♔h6! 34.g4 ♖g1! (34...♖e3? 35.g5+ ♔g6 36.♗c2++-) 35.g5+ ♖xg5-+ 36.♗d1 ♖g1! 37.♖b5 ♘xd1) 33...♖g1 34.♔g5! ♗e4 35.♔f4 ♗xb1 36.♗xf7.

Trying to find the truth here will take another few days of analysis, so let me leave that up to you readers!

31...♘g4+

Ending in a well-deserved draw for both players!

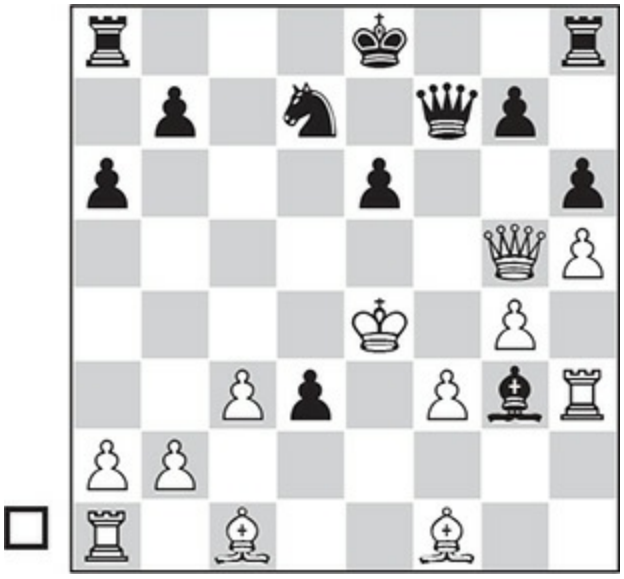
31...♖xe1 32.d5∞.

Game 64 Level 5

Anatoly Karpov

Alexander Zaitsev

USSR 1970



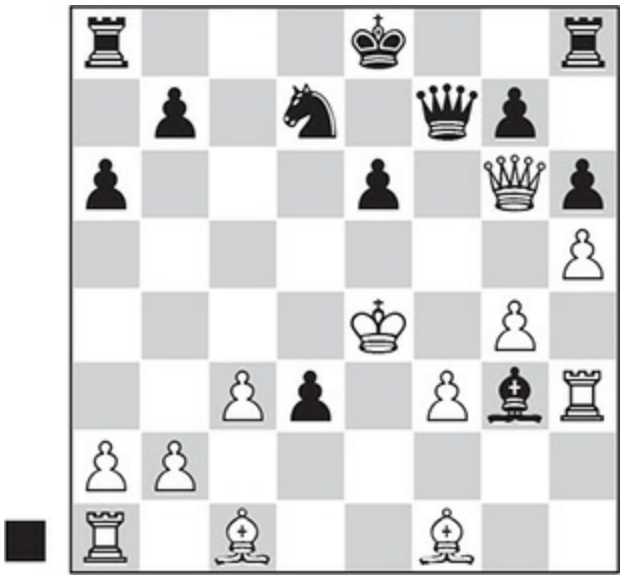
When I first saw this game more than two decades ago, I was mightily impressed by Karpov's defensive technique. Subsequently, when I became a full-fledged coach and analysed this game with my students, I began to realise that the position had many more resources than I had understood when I saw the game as a player.

Also in this game I will give more than one option for one side at many places. Earlier in the pre-computer era, human analysis missed many instructive and hard-to-find resources. With the arrival of computers, analytical engines have shown that in most positions there is more than one good option available for both sides. For a coach, it is very interesting to find out if the human mind can be trained to find these resources that earlier (pre-computer era) it was unable or untrained to do. It is apparent now that humans calculate and defend much better than a couple of decades ago. The computer influence is the main factor in my view. Once we expose the human mind to the possibilities, it will strive to achieve the new norms to a large extent. Even though humans can probably never analyse at the level of engines anymore, it is possible to take the help and inspiration from engines to further our capabilities to previously unknown levels. I have personally

trained players with ratings in the range of 1400-1800 to analyse variations that players of previous generations with a rating range of 2200-2400 were unable to do. This is one of the reasons my students in the 9 to 14 age group can quickly become International Masters or grandmasters. With proper training, they can be taught to analyse at a much higher level than was thought possible earlier. Unfortunately, the limitations we set on our mind also grow with our age.

21.♕e3!

A) 21.♕g6??

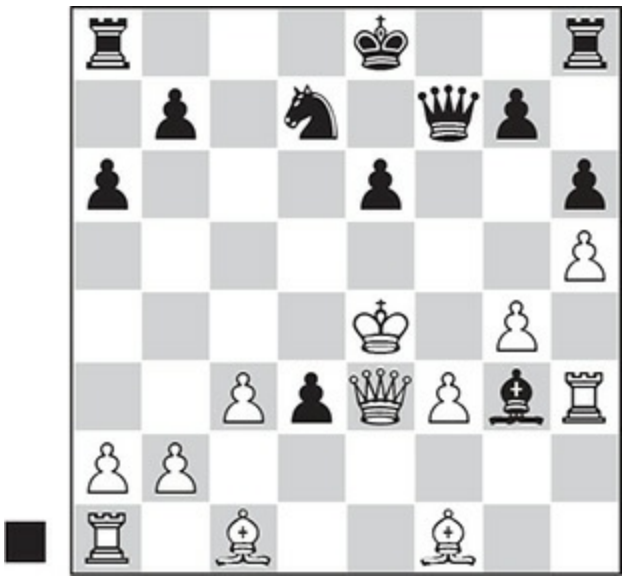


analysis diagram

TASK 1: *Find the win for Black. Time to think: 3 minutes.*

21...♘c5+ 22.♔d4 (22.♔e3 ♗f4+! 23.♔f2 d2-+) 22...0-0-0+!∓ 23.♔xc5 (not really White's intention when he played 21.♕g6, right?) 23...♕c7+ 24.♔b4 ♖d4+! 25.cxd4 ♗d6+ 26.♔b3 ♕c2# – very pretty.

B) 21.♕a5? ♗c7-+.



TASK 2: *Find the best way to continue the attack. Time to think: 10 minutes.*

21...e5?

This move throws away most of Black's advantage.

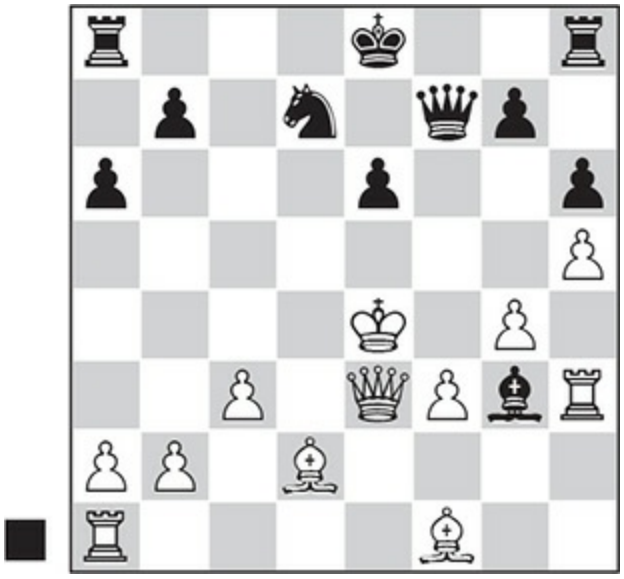
A) 21...♘f6+? is very tempting, but it lets the white king off the hook: 22.♔xd3 ♘xg4! (if 22...♘d5? 23.♕e4 ♘f4+ 24.♗xf4 ♗xf4 25.♔c2 0-0-0 26.♗d3 – White has consolidated and stands clearly better) 23.fxg4 ♕xf1+ 24.♔c2 ♕xh3 (as happens often in chess, when one side's initiative ends, the other side just begins his initiative!) 25.♕xe6+

A1) 25...♔f8? is too risky: 26.♗e3! ♕g2+ 27.♔b3 ♗f2 (to stop 28.♗c5 check) 28.♗f4! ♗g3 29.♗xg3 ♕xg3 30.♖f1++-;

A2) 25...♔d8 26.♕d5+ (26.♗e3? ♕h2+! (26...♕g2+? 27.♔b3 ♔c7 28.♖g1 ♕c6 29.♕f7+=) 27.♔b3 ♔c7!-+; Black's king will feel very safe on b8) 26...♔e7 27.♕xb7+ ♔e6 (27...♔f6 28.♕f3+ ♔e6=; 28...♔e7? is inaccurate in view of 29.♗d2! (threatening 30.♖e1) 29...♕h2 30.♖h1! ♕f2 31.♖e1+ ♔d7 32.♕b7+ ♗c7 33.♖e3!±, Black's king comes under pressure) 28.♕e4+ ♔d7=.

B) 21...0-0-0? (or 21...♖d8?) 22.♔xd3 and White's king escapes from the danger zone;

C) 21...d2! 22.♗xd2



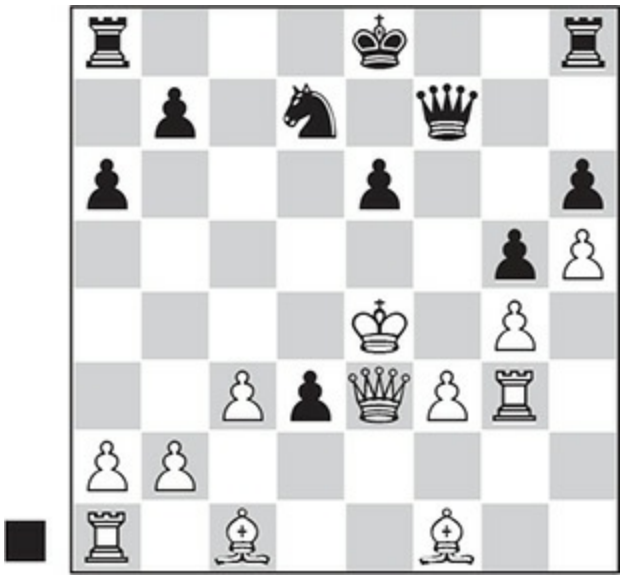
analysis diagram

TASK 3: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

22...g5!!-+ (22...0-0-0 23.♕d3+-). The same idea in a different move order also works here. The main idea of the move is to open the b1-h7 diagonal for the black queen. Once the queen reaches the h7-square, White's king will feel immense heat: 23.♕d3 ♗f4! (Black should act quickly, otherwise the white king will run away) 24.♕f2 (24.♕e2? ♕h7+-+) 24...♕h7+ (24...♘c5+!? 25.♕xc5 ♖d8+ 26.♕c2 ♖xd2+ 27.♕b3 ♕d7∓) 25.♕e2 ♕c2!. A couple of moves ago, the black queen was not playing an active role, but look how great it looks on c2! Learning how to activate pieces in the shortest possible time is one of the hallmarks of a strong player. Along with opening/middlegame/endgame technicalities, one needs to learn lots of other such important things that are not highlighted in books. 26.♕e1 (26.♖d1 0-0-0 27.♕e1 ♘e5-+; White is almost in zugzwang) 26...♕xb2! 27.♖d1 ♕xa2-+ and Black has an extra pawn. Sometimes, or should I say most of the time, gaining material should be shunned while we are in the process of attacking the opponent's king. But it is also equally important to know when it is alright to win material while attacking, especially if our attack is not decisive or if the gain of material does not reduce the intensity of our attack;

D) 21...g5!!. As explained in the analysis of the 21...d2 variation, the main idea is to open the b1-h7 diagonal for the black queen, to keep the pressure on White's king alive.

D1) 22.♖xg3?!



analysis diagram

TASK 4: *Refute 22.♖xg3. Time to think: 10 minutes.*

22...♕h7+ 23.♔d4 and now:

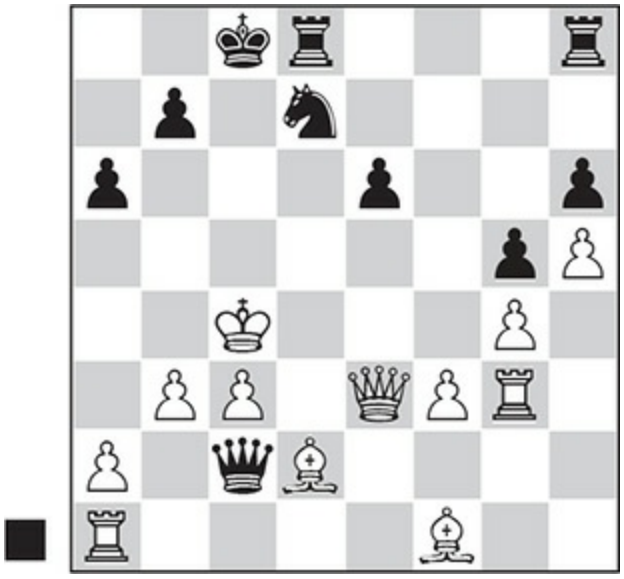
D11) 23...0-0-0?! is a tempting continuation that unfortunately does not work for Black:

D111) 24.♔c4? (the white king wants to go to b3 and then to safety on a2 after advancing the a2-pawn)

D1111) The 24...♕e7?! idea is noble, to go to the d6-square with tempo (attacking the ♖g3), followed by ♕d5 or supporting ...♘c5 or ...♘e5 options. But White has a nice move to save himself: 25.♖h3! is a deep, strange prophylactic move when our king is in the middle of a dangerous attack! (25.b4? ♕d6!, with the double threat of 26...♕d5 and 26...♕g3, e.g. 26.♔b3 ♕xg3 27.♗xd3∓) 25...♕d6 26.♔b3 (now that the rook is not hanging on g3, White has time to attend to his king's safety) 26...♘c5+ 27.♔a3!.

For many upcoming players, playing such a move takes a big toll, as they are scared of the possible discovered check, a fear of ghosts. An inexperienced mind is more afraid of the unknown (even if it is good) than the known bad! This is mainly because an inexperienced player allows his emotions, likes and dislikes to influence his decisions, rather than the truth that is in front of him (lack of objectivity). Fear of making mistakes and lack of practical strength are the causes for lack of objectivity. A player can overcome this problem by learning to work hard on improving his chess strength and by teaching himself to take decisions based on the analysis of a position instead of emotions, likes and dislikes.
27...d2! is the only way to try to gain something from the discovered check that follows: 28.♗xd2 ♘e4+ 29.♔b3 ♘xd2+ 30.♔c2 and Black's attack comes to a stop;

D1112) 24...d2! 25.♗xd2 ♕c2! (not allowing the king to the safety of b3 and eventually a2) 26.b3



analysis diagram

TASK 5: *Find a good way to continue the attack. Time to think: 10 minutes.*

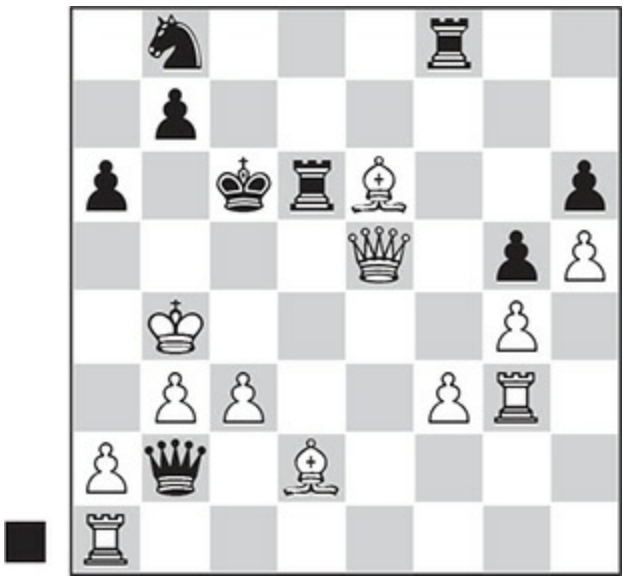
D11121) 26...♖hf8! is very logical, bringing the last piece into the attack with a threat (27...♖f4+): 27.♔b4 ♕b2! 28.♗c4 (28.♖e1 ♕xa2-+)

28...♘b8! (a typical retreat in such situations! 28...♖f4?! 29.♕e2!). Now:

D111211) 29.♕xe6+ ♔c7-+ (29...♖d7? 30.♗d5=);

D111212) 29.♗c1 ♘c6+! (29...♕xa1? 30.♔a3 ♖d1 31.♗b2 ♕b1 32.♕c5++-) 30.♔a4 ♕xa1 31.♔a3 ♖d1 32.♗b2 ♕b1∓;

D111213) 29.♗xe6+ ♔c7 30.♕e5+ ♖d6 31.♕g7+ ♔c6! (this looks counter-intuitive, as it denies the c6-square for the knight. But the new threat now is 32...a5+. Both kings are coming at each other in a direct battle! 31...♔b6? 32.♗e3++-; 31...♖d7? 32.♗xd7+-) 32.♕e5



analysis diagram

TASK 6: *Time to think: 2 minutes.*

32...a5+! (32...♕xa1?? 33.♕c5#) 33.♕xa5 ♘a6+ 34.♔a4 (34.♔c4 loses in multiple ways: 34...♖f4+ 35.♗xf4 ♕e2# or 34...♖d4+ 35.♔xd4 ♕xd2+ 36.♔c4 ♖f4#) 34...♘c5+ (34...♕xa1 also wins, but slows down our attack) 35.♔b4 ♖d4+! 36.cxd4 ♕xd2+-+ or 36.♗c4 ♘d3+ 37.♔a4 ♖xc4+ 38.bxc4 ♖a8-+.

D11122) 26...♘b8? 27.♕xe6+ ♖d7 28.♗e1+-;

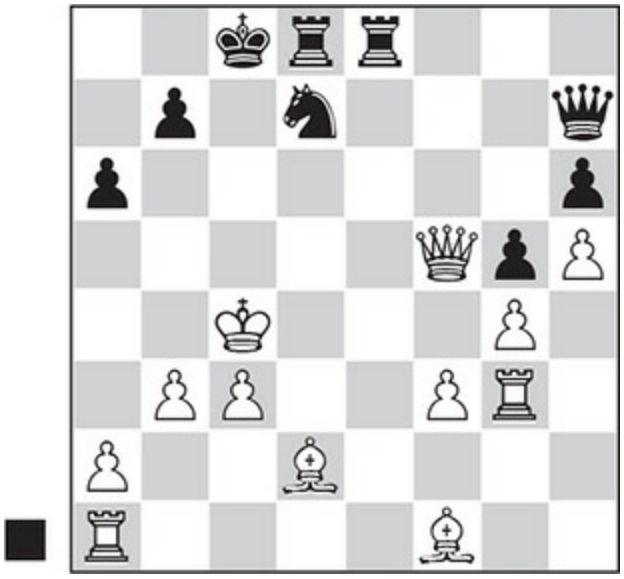
D11123) 26...♕b2?! 27.♖e1= (27.♖d1 ♔c7 28.♗c1 ♕xa2 29.♖xd7+);

D11124) 26...♔c7?! 27.♖g2 ♕h7 28.b4∞;

D11125) 26...b5+? 27.♔b4 ♘b8 28.♕c5+ ♔b7 29.♗e3! ♘c6+

30.♔a3+-;

D11126) 26...♕h7!. The idea is to play 27...b5+ on the next move, meet ♔b4 with ...♕e7 check and deliver mate soon after. Such backward movements of major pieces are easy to miss, even for stronger players. 27.♕xe6 ♖he8 (27...♔b8? 28.♔b4 ♕e7 is no longer possible) 28.♕f5.



analysis diagram

Preparing ♔c4-d3-♔c2, as the ♘d7 is under a pin now.

TASK 7: *Time to think: 3 minutes.*

D111261) 28...♕e7!? 29.b4! (preparing ♔c4-b3 along with ♔c4-d3) 29...♖f8 30.♕a5 (30.♖e1 ♕d6 31.♕e6 ♕xg3∓) 30...♕f7+ 31.♔d3 ♕h7+ 32.♔e3 ♕c2 33.♕d5! ♖fe8+ 34.♔f2 ♘e5 35.♕c5+ ♔b8 36.♔g1 ♕xd2 37.♔h1∓. Although Black's pieces are extremely active, White's king has run to comparative safety of the kingside, which was unimaginable a few moves ago;

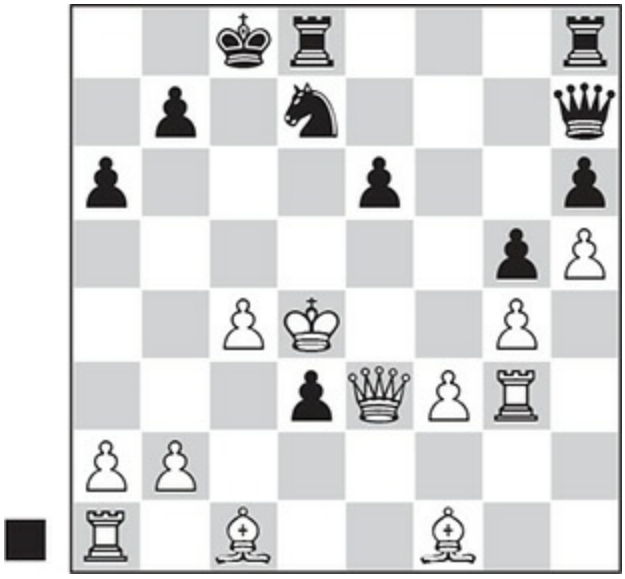
D111262) 28...♕g8+? 29.♔b4! ♖e5 30.♗c4! (a nice intermediate move that saves the day for White) 30...♕h8 31.♕f7∞;

D111263) 28...♕h8?! 29.♔d3! ♖e5 30.♕f7 ♖d5+ 31.♕xd5 ♘c5+ 32.♔c4 ♖xd5 33.♔xd5 ♕d8+ 34.♔xc5 ♕xd2 35.♖g2 ♕xc3+ 36.♔d5

♕xa1 37.♗d3. This could be a fortress that is difficult to break;

D111264) 28...♕g7! retains most of the inherent threats in the position: 29.♔d3 (29.b4 ♖f8-+; 29.♔b4 ♕e7+ 30.♔c4 ♖f8-+; 29.f4 ♖f8 30.♕e6 ♖f6-+) 29...♖e5 30.♕g6 ♘f8+-+.

D112) 24.c4??



analysis diagram

TASK 8: *Find a clear-cut way to win for Black. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

D1121) 24...d2? 25.♗xd2 ♕c2 26.♕c3 is one of the points of 24.c4;

D1122) 24...♘e5+! 25.♔c3 (25.♔xe5 ♕c7+ 26.♔e4 ♕xc4+-+) 25...♕c7! 26.♕e4 ♘c6! (a double threat of 27...♕a5+ and 27...♕xg3; 26...d2? 27.♗xd2 ♕a5+ 28.b4 ♕a3+ 29.♔c2 ♖xd2+ 30.♔xd2 ♕b2+ 31.♔e3 ♕xa1 32.♗e2=) 27.♖g2 ♕a5+-+;

D1123) 24...♘b6+! is the simplest: 25.♔c3 ♕c7! (with a triple threat of 26...♕xg3, 26...♕xc4+ and 26...♘d5+) 26.♕e4 ♕xg3-+.

D113) 24.♕xe6? ♖he8 25.♕f5 ♕g7+ 26.♔xd3 ♖e5 27.♕g6 ♘f8+-+;

D114) 24.♕g1? ♘e5+ 25.♔e3 ♘c4+ 26.♔f2 d2! and Black is winning everywhere;

D115) 24.♕e1!⩲, giving space for White's king to come back to safety via

the e3-square. It's extremely hard to keep calm and defend in such volatile positions with an exposed king. 24...♘e5+ 25.♔e3 ♘c4+ (25...d2 26.♗xd2) 26.♔f2 d2 27.♕xe6+ ♔b8 28.♗xd2 ♘xd2 29.♕b6∞; White's king has gone into relative safety on the kingside.

Back to the position after 23.♔d4:

D12) 23...0-0? 24.♕xe6+ ♔h8 25.♕g6!+- will badly backfire for Black;

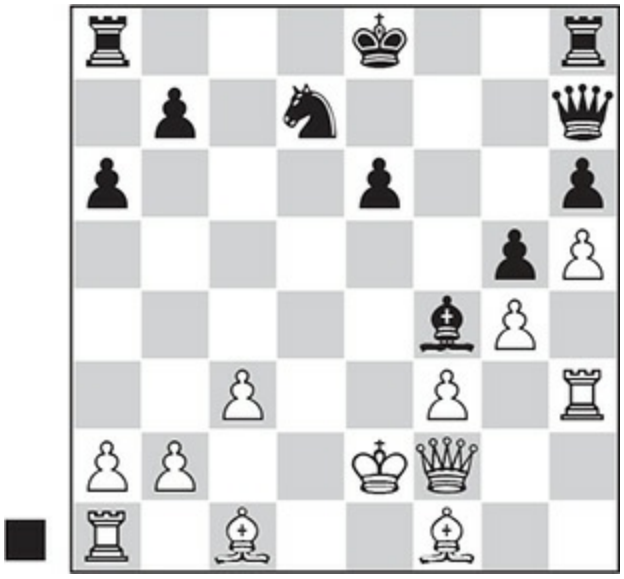
D13) 23...e5+! 24.♔c4 and now:

D131) 24...b5+? 25.♔b3 ♕f7+ 26.♔a3+-;

D132) 24...d2? 25.♕xd2!+- (25.♗xd2? ♕c2-+);

D133) 24...♖c8+! 25.♔b3 ♕f7+ (the ladder-building begins) 26.♔a3 ♕e7+ 27.♔b3 ♕e6+ 28.♔a3 ♕d6+ 29.♔b3 ♕d5+ 30.♔a3 ♕a5+ 31.♔b3 ♘c5+-+.

D2) 22.♔xd3! ♗f4 23.♕f2 (23.♕e2? ♘c5+ (23...♕h7+? 24.♔c4=) 24.♔c2 ♕h7+ 25.♔d1 0-0-0+ 26.♔e1 ♘d3+-+) offers better resistance for White: 23...♕h7+ (23...♘e5+? 24.♔c2) 24.♔e2



analysis diagram

TASK 9: *Time to think: 3 minutes.*

24...e5!∓ (when White takes on f4, Black has ...exf4, gaining access to many

beautiful dark squares for his pieces like e3 and e5; 24...♗c7!∓; 24...♘e5?! 25.♔e1!⇆; 24...0-0 25.♗xf4 ♖xf4 26.♖d1⇆) 25.♗xf4 exf4 26.♗g2 (26.♕d4 0-0-0 27.♔f2 ♖he8 28.♗d3 (28.♔g1 ♘e5 29.♕c5+ ♔b8-+) 28...♕e7-+; the ♖h3 looks as well placed as a tea shop on the moon!) 26...0-0-0 27.♔f1 ♖he8 28.♔g1 ♖e3 29.♖h1 ♘e5 and his total dark-square domination gives Black a clear advantage.

Now we go back to the game!

22.♔xd3!

The king is running back to safety.

22...♗f4 23.♕g1!?

23.♕e2 0-0-0 24.♔c2 ♘b6 25.♕e4⇆.

23...0-0-0 24.♔c2

White's king has at last reached safety. Such a turn of events in a game can have strange but perfectly understandable reactions on a human mind. Black will realise that he has let the initiative slip out of his hands and will be blaming himself for his mistakes and missed opportunities. Black will also doubt his ability to think clearly in the remaining part of the game. White will realise that the worst is behind him and he has just made a miraculous escape from certain danger. This will make him hopeful about his future prospects, and also he will realise that his opponent is missing things, and if he does not

recover quickly, he might continue making further concessions that White can capitalise on and even win the game.

24...♗xc1 25.♖xc1

25.♔xc1?! loses time. Many upcoming players will choose this, not wanting to go into another phase of difficult positions by losing the a2-pawn. A typical case of love of material triumphing over piece activity and time.

25...♕xa2 26.♖h2

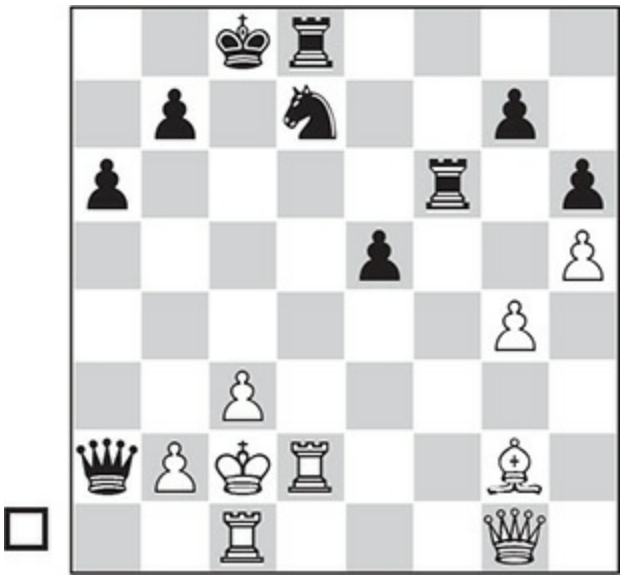
26.♗d3!? ♔b8 27.♖h2∞.

26...♖hf8

These days, any experienced player will not hesitate much to play 26...e4!? 27.fxe4 ♖he8∞.

27.♖d2 ♕a4+?!

A) 27...♖xf3? 28.♗g2 ♖f6



analysis diagram

TASK 10: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

A1) 29.♗d5 ♕a5!∞;

A2) The natural 29.♖cd1? is a big mistake, as it ignores Black's threat: 29...♖b6!∓ 30.♕xb6 ♘xb6 31.♖xd8+ ♔c7 (we know that queen and knight combine well for an attack on the opponent's king) 32.♗f3 (32.♖8d2

♕a4+ 33.♔b1 ♕xg4-+) 32...e4!-+;

A3) 29.♖a1! is an important intermediate move: 29...♕c4 30.♖ad1!± and the pin along the d-file is very annoying for Black.

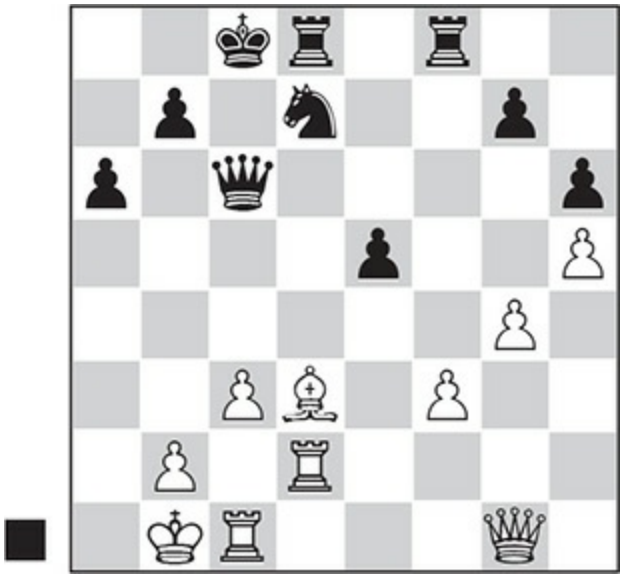
B) 27...♔b8!? 28.♗d3 ♕a4+ 29.♔b1 ♕f4 30.♖cd1 ♘f6⇋. While playing against a lone bishop for the opponent, it is important to come up with good squares for our pieces on the opposite colour of the opponent's bishop, which is precisely what Black has done here.

28.♔b1±

Even though analytical engines do not give any advantage for either player here, it is practically easier to play for White than for Black.

28...♕c6 29.♗d3

29.♖e1!? ♘b6! 30.♖d3± (30.♖xe5?! ♖xd2 31.♖c5 ♖xf3 32.♖xc6+ bxc6 33.♗xa6+ (33.♕xb6 ♖xf1+ 34.♔a2 ♖ff2 35.♕xc6+ ♔d8⇋) 33...♔c7 34.♔c1 ♖df2 35.g5 ♘d7⇋).



TASK 11: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

29...♔c7??

This is a mistake that essentially was waiting to happen for a long time. The foundation for it was laid much earlier, when Black failed to capitalise on White's exposed king in the opening phase. In such situations, the general human tendency is to keep blaming oneself for missing the boat. We keep

rewinding and playing in our mind the position with White's king on e4! This is something we should not do.

Once we realise that we have made a mistake during a practical game, it is important to accept our mistake in a manner that does not affect our confidence. Once we cross the limit and start doubting our abilities as a player as a result of one or two bad mistakes, the downward spiral cannot be avoided. Forgiving oneself for mistakes made during a game or during a tournament is important, to recover from them sooner. If we keep blaming ourselves for our mistakes, as most players are likely to do, it will affect our confidence and will lay the foundation for further mistakes during the same game or in subsequent rounds in a tournament.

With 29...♘c5!? 30.♗f5+ ♔b8 31.♖cd1 ♖xd2 32.♖xd2 e4! 33.♕g3+ (33.fxe4 ♘xe4 34.♖d1 ♘f6⇆) 33...♔a8 34.f4 ♕b5 35.♕e3 ♕f1+ 36.♔c2 ♕b5⇆ Black could have maintained the balance.

30.♗e4

Now White's pieces have started to coordinate much better, and Black is much worse with the weak e5-pawn and an exposed king. White won with 'Karpovian' technique:

30...♕b6 31.♕h2! ♖de8 32.♖cd1 ♘f6 33.♗g6

33.♖d6 ♕e3.

33...♖e7 34.♖e1

34.♖d6 ♕xd6 35.♖xd6 ♔xd6 36.♕d2+ ♔c7 37.c4+-.

34...♕b5 35.♖de2 ♘d7 36.♗f5 ♖xf5 37.gxf5 ♕d3+ 38.♔a1 ♕xf5 39.♕h4 ♘f6 40.♕c4+ ♔d8 41.♕c5 ♘d7 42.♕d5 ♔c8 43.♖e4 b5 44.♕c6+ ♔d8 45.♕xa6 ♕xh5 46.f4 ♕f5 47.♕a8+ ♔c7 48.♕a5+ ♔c6 49.c4 b4 50.♕xb4 ♖e6 51.fxe5 1-0

After getting Karpov into trouble, Black kind of drifted by not choosing the critical continuations at the right time and allowed White to consolidate his position and take his king to the safety of the queenside pawns. From that moment, Karpov played like he usually did and gradually outplayed Zaitsev.

CHAPTER 4

Forcing moves

In this chapter, we will see a few more examples of employing forcing moves in the calculation process.

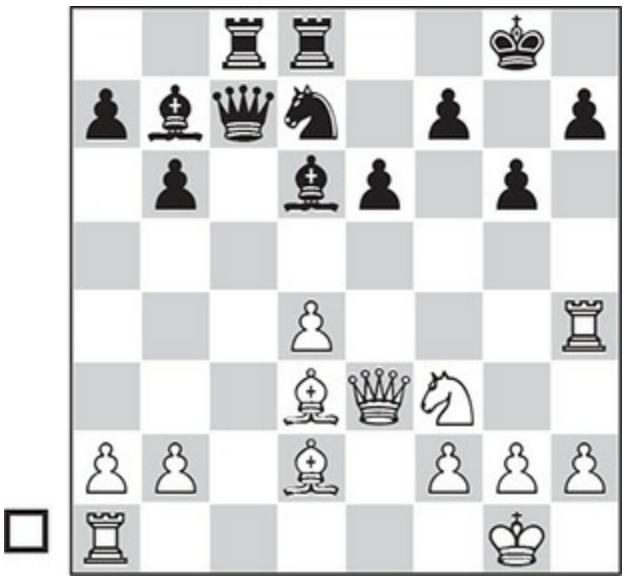
As we have seen earlier, forcing moves are checks, captures, threats and pawn breaks. Most books exclude pawn breaks from the list of forcing moves. But in my practice, I have seen that including this item will help upcoming players to improve their calculation skills quickly. One of the quickest ways to improve calculation is by learning to calculate forcing moves quickly and correctly.

When there are many forcing moves on our list of candidates, we should try to use the forcing move that meets the drawback principle the most.

Game 65 Level 2

Lars Bo Hansen	2580
Giovanni Vescovi	2465

Copenhagen 1995 (4)



A brief look at the position shows that Black's kingside is completely deserted for the moment. He has clustered his pieces on the queenside. White could use this moment to attack *en masse*!

17.♗xg6! (capture)

17.♖xh7? is another capture, but one that does not work: 17...♔xh7 18.♕h6+? (18.♗xg6+ ♔g8!∓) 18...♔g8 19.♗xg6 ♘f8!-+; 17.♕h6? ♘f6∓.

17...fxg6

17...hxg6? 18.♕h6 forces mate.

18.♕xe6+ (check) 18...♔g7

19.♖xh7+! (check)

19.♗h6+ ♔h8 20.♕f7 ♗f8 (20...♖g8 21.♕xh7+ ♔xh7 22.♗f8#) 21.♗f4!+-.

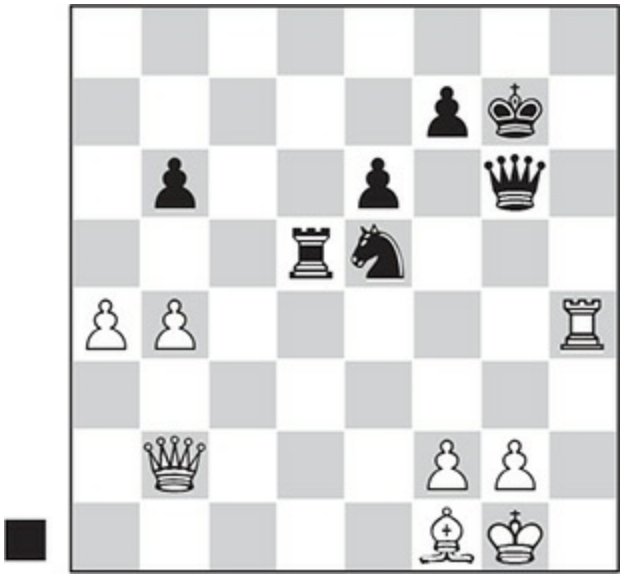
19...♔xh7 20.♘g5+ (check) 20...♔h6 21.♕h3+ (check) 21...♔g7 22.♕h7+ (check) 22...♔f6 23.♕f7#

White used his superiority of forces on the kingside to finish Black off with forcing moves, without allowing Black any breathing time.

Game 66 Level 2

Zhu Chen	2539
Viktor Kortchnoi	2620

Schuhplattler 2000 (9)



The loose pieces on b2 and h4 catch the eye!

40...♕f6 (threat)

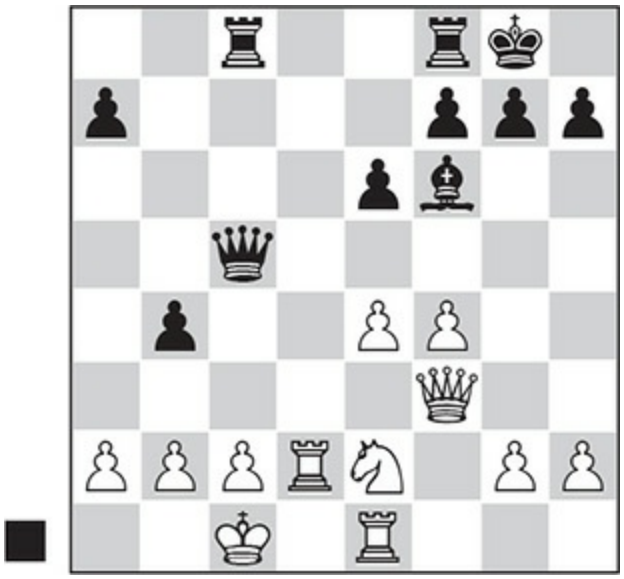
As Smyslov has said: ‘Chess is a game of double attack.’

41.♖h3 ♘f3+ (check) 42.♖xf3 ♕xb2 (capture) 0-1

Game 67 Level 2

Iuliu Hegedus	2295
Romeo Sorin Milu	2380

Romania 1991



Once again, we see that castling on opposite sides has taken place. As regards the attack against the king, Black already starts out ahead. His queen and rook make use of the semi-open c-file and his bishop on f6 is a fine attacking piece. Apart from this, the fact that White's king is on c1 leaves certain squares undefended, like a2 and a1.

1...b3!! (pawn break)

A fantastic move, although one that has become standard in such positions.

2.axb3

2.♕xb3 ♖b8!; 2.c3 bxa2∓.

2...♕a5! (threat)

White's king is overloaded. How can he defend both a1 and d2?

3.♔d1

3.c3 ♕a1+ 4.♔c2 ♕xe1-+; 3.♔b1 ♕xd2-+.

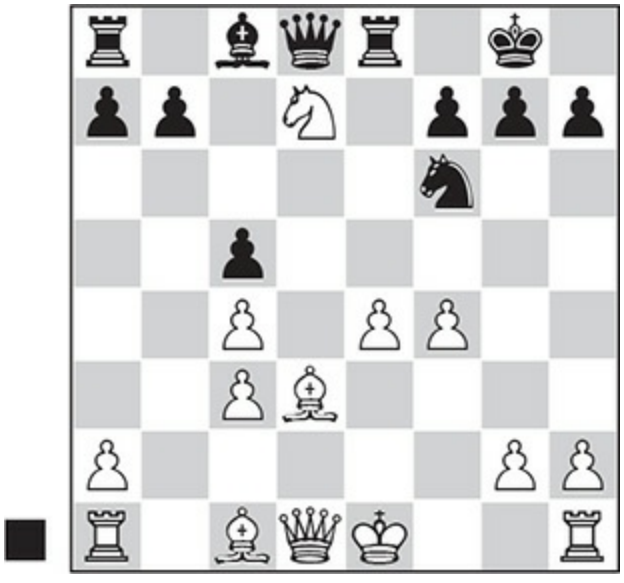
3...♕a1+ (check) 4.♘c1 ♗xb2 (capture) 5.♔e2 ♗xc1 (capture) 0-1

Black had very good attacking forces lined up. This and also the fact that White lacked coordination of his pieces, made the position winning for Black!

Game 68 Level 2

Arnd Lauber	2464
David Baramidze	2591

Germany Bundesliga 2011/12 (11)



Black is ahead in development, White's king is still in the centre. These are the key factors in the position. Black has to use his time advantage based on these factors.

12...♘xe4! (capture) 13.♘e5

13.0-0 ♗xd7∓.

13...♕h4+ (check) 14.g3 ♘xg3 (capture) 15.hxg3 ♕xh1+ (check) 16.♔d2 ♕xd1+ (check) 17.♔xd1 f6! (threat)

The critical move.

18.♘f3 ♗g4 (threat) 19.♗e2 ♖ad8+ (check)

19...♖e4, with the idea of ...♖ae8, wins material.

20.♗d2 ♖d7 (threat) 21.♖b1

21.♘g1 ♗xe2+ 22.♘xe2 ♖ed8.

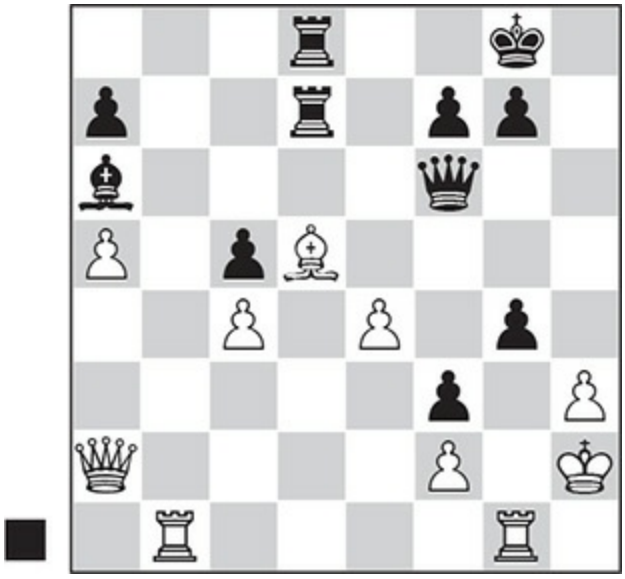
21...♖de7-+ 22.♘g1 ♗xe2+ 23.♘xe2 ♖xe2 24.♖xb7 ♖g2 0-1

Black simply overpowered his opponent with his better development. He did not hesitate to look for intermediate moves and keep strengthening his attack.

Game 69 Level 2

Dmitrij Jakovenko	2710
Magnus Carlsen	2714

Moscow 2007 (3)



How can Black use forcing move tactics and get an advantage? Note that

Black can not only exploit the exposed position of White's king, but also there might be tactics based on the fact that White's bishop cannot leave d5. A penetration by the rook to d2 is most likely decisive.

32...♗xc4! 33.♕xc4

33.♗xc4 ♖d2-+ (threat).

33...♕f4+ (check) 34.♖g3 ♖xd5! (capture)

This tactic works by using the horizontal pin.

35.♕xd5 ♖xd5 (capture) 36.exd5 c4

Since White's pieces lack coordination, the c-pawn, with the support from Black's queen, should win the game.

37.♖d1 c3 38.d6 c2 39.♖d3

39...♕c4

39...c1♕ 40.d7 ♕c2 41.d8♕+ ♔h7 42.♕h4+ ♕h6 was also winning, as Carlsen wrote in his comments.

40.♖e3 ♕c6

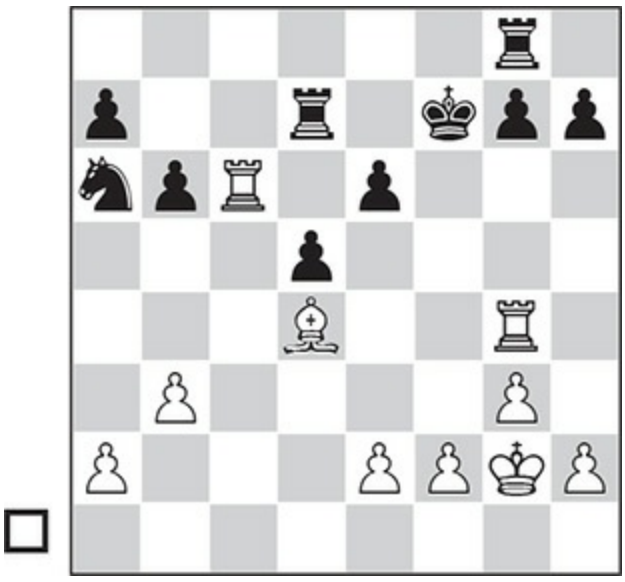
40...c1♕ 41.d7 ♕d2.

41.♖d3 ♕c5 0-1

An accurate finish! Black used tactical themes, like a pin and an overloaded piece, to win material, and accurately converted once he got there.

Game 70 Level 2

Ruslan Ponomariov 2705
Evgeny Tomashevsky 2646
Khanty-Mansiysk 2007 (3)



A cursory look at the position shows the huge disparity in the strengths of the minor pieces. The knight on a6 is no match for the bishop on d4. Combined with this, White's rooks are also more actively placed than Black's. So it is little wonder that there would be tactical opportunities to crown White's advantage. Find a series of forcing moves to win for White.

32.♖c8! (threat) 32...e5

32...♖xc8 33.♖xg7+ ♔e8 34.♖g8++-.

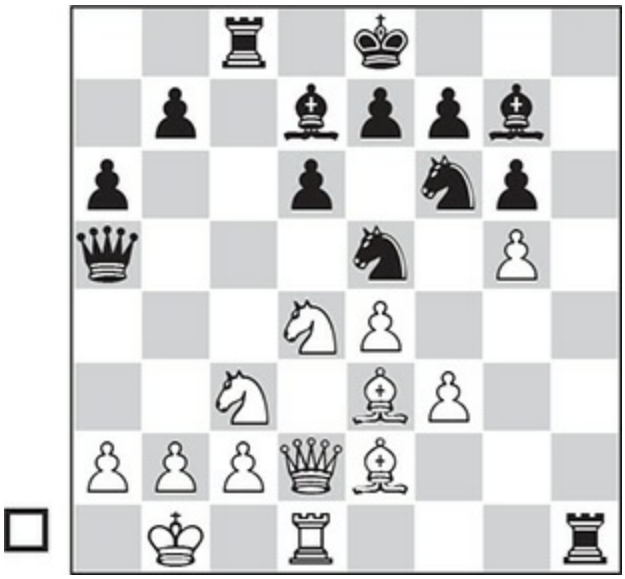
33.♖xg8 (capture) 33...♔xg8 34.♗xe5 (capture)

White has won a pawn and has a winning position.

34...♘c5 35.♖d4

This is an easy win for White, as he has a material advantage and a positional one, in the form of a better pawn structure and the rook+bishop versus rook+knight tandem. A tactical idea flowed from a positionally much superior position.

Game 71 Level 2
Mikhail Tal
Arthur Feuerstein



There are many pieces hanging here. Tal was usually in his element in such positions. Also, an important feature is the proximity of White's g-pawn to promotion. In such positions, of course one has to calculate non-standard captures and intermediate moves:

16.gxf6! (capture) 16...♖xd1+ 17.♘xd1! (capture) 17...♕xd2 18.fxg7!! (capture)

The brilliant point of the previous move. White just captures the bishop after giving up his queen. He can afford to do this because his pawn is also quite close to becoming a new queen!

18...e6 19.g8♕+ (check) 19...♔e7 20.♕g7! 1-0

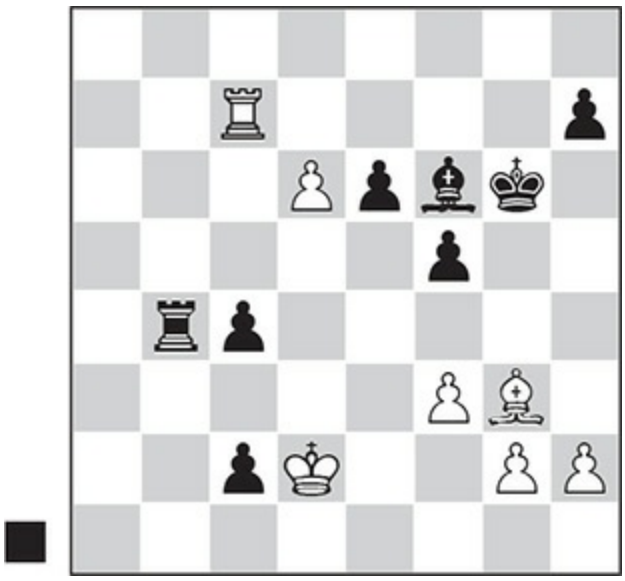
White used the tactical ideas based on loose pieces and pawn promotion to win the game!

20.♕xc8! ♕xd1+ 21.♗xd1 would have won as well.

Game 72 Level 2

Veselin Topalov	2804
Peter Svidler	2743

Sofia 2006 (6)



TASK 1: *Find a way for Black to make use of his passed pawn effectively using forcing moves. Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

Black's pawn is very near the promotion square. This always gives additional tactical possibilities. Perhaps not that obvious a feature in the position is that White's bishop on g3 is running short of squares and Black is able to harass it using tactical means.

41...f4! (threat) 42.♗e1

After 42.♗xf4? c3+ (check) 43.♔xc2 ♖xf4 (capture), Black wins the bishop and the game.

42.♗f2? c3+! (check) 43.♔xc2 ♖b2+ (check) 44.♔d3 ♖xf2 (capture) also loses the bishop for White.

42...♖b1!

Threatening to promote the c-pawn.

Not 42...♗c3+?! 43.♔xc2 ♗xe1 44.d7 ♗h4 45.♖c8!, and White escapes.

43.♖xc4 ♖d1+ (check) 44.♔xc2 ♖xe1 (capture)

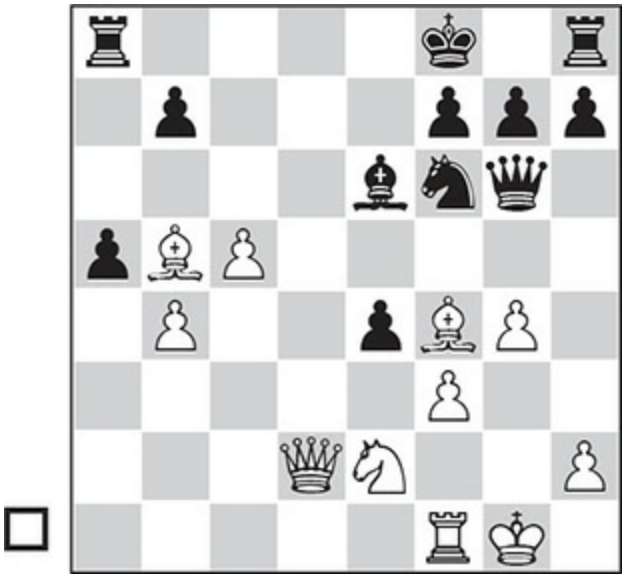
And Black gets a winning position.

45.♖xf4 ♖e2+ 46.♔d3 ♖e5 47.♖g4+ ♔f7 48.♖a4 ♖d5+

And Black won easily.

Game 73 Level 3

Rustam Kasimdzhanov 2690



TASK 1: *Find a series of forcing moves to increase the advantage for White. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

The positions of the kings in the current position do not present a rosy picture. Black has not been able to castle, although it should also be mentioned that White has opened his king's castled position a little bit. Black's pieces are clustered around the kingside and it feels that they are lacking space. The uncastled black king also means that there is no connection between his rooks. These features lead White in the direction of using Black's lack of coordination and doing something quickly.

21.♗b8!! (threat)

21.♗d6+?, the other tempting move, turns out to release White's pressure; for example, after 21...♔g8 22.♘f4 ♕g5 23.h4 ♕xh4 24.♘xe6 fxe6 25.g5 ♘e8 26.♗d7 ♘xd6 27.♗xe6+ ♘f7 28.fxe4 ♕g3+ 29.♔h1 ♕h4+=.

21...♘d5

A) 21...♖xb8?! 22.♕d6++-;

B) 21...♗d7?! 22.♘f4 ♕h6 23.♕d6+ ♔g8 24.♗c4 exf3 25.♕e7 ♗e8 26.♗d6+-;

C) 21...♘e8 22.♕d8+-.

22.♘f4! (threat) 22...♕h6 23.♘xe6+ (check) 23...♕xe6

23...fxe6 24.fxe4+ (check) 24...♔g8 25.♗d7! (25.♕xh6 gxh6 26.♗e5) 25...♖xb8 26.exd5.

24.♗d6+ (check) 24...♔g8

24...♘e7 25.♖e1+-.

25.♗c4 (threat) 25...exf3 26.♗xd5 (capture) 26...♕xg4+ 27.♔h1 axb4 28.♗xf3+- (capture) 28...♕c4 29.♕g2 h5 30.♗d5 ♕g4 31.♗xf7+ ♔h7 32.♕c2+ g6 33.♗xg6+

Black resigned; mate will follow soon.

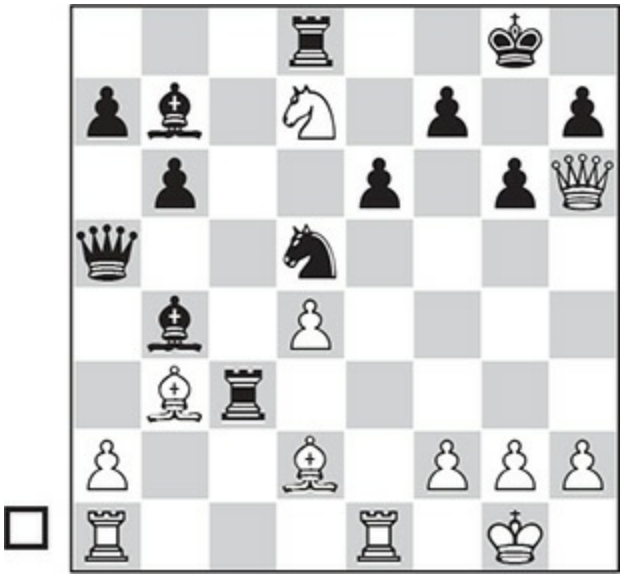
White vigorously attacked Black and finished him off using his better-placed pieces and his pair of bishops.

Black struggled to cope with this until the very end because of his complete lack of coordination. This was especially evident with the stranded rook on h8 contributing to his demise.

Game 74 Level 3

James Plaskett	2515
Nigel Short	2683

4NCL tt 1999/2000



Even a cursory look shows that Black's pieces are clustered on the queenside

and his kingside is largely defenceless.

23.♗xd5! ♖xd7

23...exd5 24.♘f6+ ♔h8 25.♕xh7#.

24.♖xe6! (capture)

The main idea. White needs to crown his attack without giving Black any time to bring his pieces back to the defence of his kingside.

24...fxe6

24...♖c8 25.♖xg6+! hxg6 26.♕xg6+ ♔f8 (26...♔h8 27.♕h5+! ♔g7 28.♗h6+! (28.♕g4+!+-) 28...♔h7 29.♗g5+ ♔g7 30.♕h6+ ♔g8 31.♗f6+-) 27.♗h6+! ♔e8 28.♕g8+ ♔e7 29.♕xf7+ ♔d8 30.♗g5+ ♗e7 31.♕f8+ ♔c7 32.♗f4+! (32.♖c1+! ♔b8 33.♗f4++-) 32...♗d6 33.♖c1++-.

25.♗xe6+ (check)

25...♔h8 25...♖f7 26.♕f4+– (26.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 27.♕xh7+ ♔f6 28.♕xb7+-).

26.♗xc3 (capture) 26...♖d8

27.♕f4! (threat) 1-0

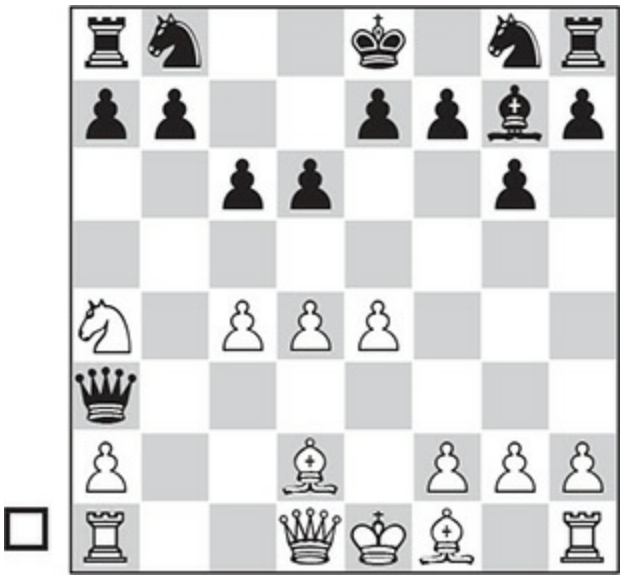
If 27...♖f8 28.d5+! (check).

A fine finish. White used several tactical themes, such as a pin, an overload, a double attack, etc., to crown his positional advantage into a win.

28.♕xf8++– was suggested here by 1785, 1900 and 2150 USCF players. All of them missed 28.d5+!. Winning material while attacking is so tempting, but

should be overcome! Focus on the attack!

Game 75 Level 3
Boris Gelfand 2720
Alexander Morozevich 2788
Moscow 2008 (9)



Here, White repeated moves:
13.♗c1
and the players agreed a draw. But White could have played for win by exploiting the unfortunate position of the black queen. It is easy to miss this non-standard feature in the position. But as in many other positions too, this is the key feature that had to be visualised to work out the coming variations:

A) 13.♖b1? ♗xd4 14.♕c2 ♘a6 15.♗c1 ♘b4∞;

B) 13.h4!, a threat with the idea of ♖h3, speaks for itself when one observes the unfortunate position of Black's queen on a3:

B1) 13...♗xd4 14.♖h3 (threat);

B2) 13...d5 and now:

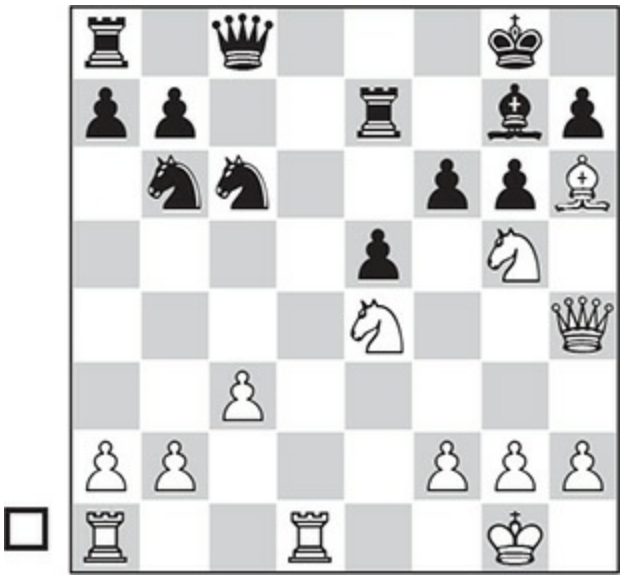
B21) 14.e5 (the 1785 player did not see this resource for a long time. Not knowing where to correct our analysis when a mistake has been made is a problem) 14...♕xa4 15.♕xa4 (capture) 15...♗xa1 16.♖b3 (threat) and White should eventually win in this position;

B22) 14.c5 was suggested by the 1785 player, but he didn't see 14...♗h6 (14...e6 15.cxd5 cxd5 16.♖b1+- or 15...exd5 16.♘c5 b6 17.♖h3+-). Missing good resources for the opponent is another problem: 15.♗xh6 ♘xh6 16.♖b1 e6 17.♖xb7 (17.c5 b5) 17...♘d7 18.♖h3 ♕f8 19.cxd5 exd5 20.♕c1+-. In this line, Black's queen was not trapped, but he is completely decimated otherwise. None of his pieces can move sensibly!

Game 76 Level 3

Michele Godena	2548
Alik Gershon	2499

Israel tt 2011/12 (9)



There is a slight discoordination among Black's forces, especially with the queen on c8. White uses this in conjunction with his already existing superiority of forces trained on the kingside to develop a quick attack:

24.♘xh7! (capture)

24.♗xg7? fxg5, and Black wins.

24...♔xh7

24...♗xh6 25.♕xh6 ♖xh7 26.♘xf6++-.

25.♗xg7+ (check) 25...♔xg7 26.♕xf6+ (check) 26...♔g8

26...♔h6 27.♖d3+-.

27.♕xg6+! (check) 27...♖g7

27...♔f8 28.♖d3! and the rook will join with decisive effect.

28.♘f6+ (check) 28...♔f8 29.♘h7+ ♔g8 30.♘f6+ ♔f8 31.♕h6! (threat)

With Black's pieces stuck on the queenside, White has time to bring in the rook and win the game.

31...♕e6

31...♕f5 32.♘h5 ♕h7 33.♕xg7+ ♕xg7 34.♘xg7 ♔xg7+-; White has a rook and too many pawns for the two minor pieces.

32.♖d3! (threat)

The simplest idea is to add more force to the attack.

32.♖d6 ♕xd6 33.♘h7+ ♔e7 34.♕xg7+ ♔d8 35.♘g5 ♕d7±.

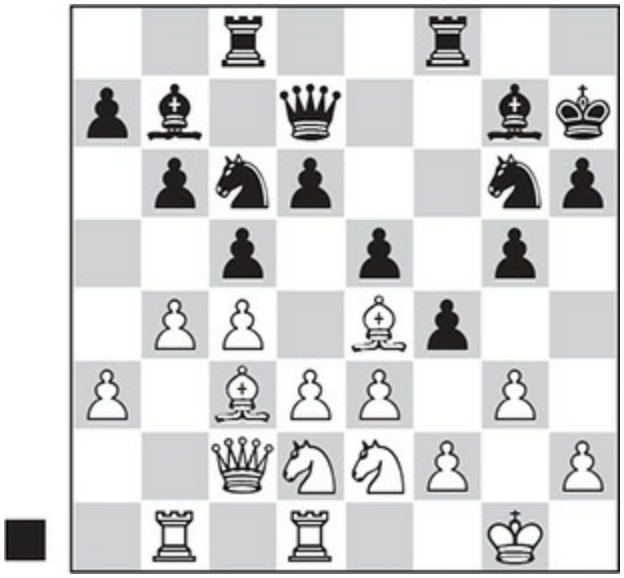
32...♘e7 33.♘h7+ ♔f7 34.♖f3+ 1-0

White perfectly timed and coordinated his forces into a swift attack. Black, being a little lacking in coordination, could not manage to shake this off.

Game 77 Level 3

Thomas Henrichs	2473
Robert Fontaine	2552

Bremen 2012 (10)



Black has a space advantage, and once again, as we have seen in a few other games, White's pieces are stuck on the queenside, leaving the kingside defenceless for the time being. The only new feature is the relatively closed nature of the position. Black needs to use tactical features to open up the position:

20...f3! (threat)

Exploiting the fact that the queen on c2 gives a tempo for Black to execute knight jumps.

20...♘d4 21.exd4 ♗xe4 22.♘xe4 exd4 was another way to play for an advantage.

21.♘xf3

21.♗xf3 ♖xf3! 22.♘xf3 ♘d4! (22...♘xb4! 23.♘xg5+ hxg5 24.axb4 ♗f3! 25.♔f1 ♕h3+ 26.♔e1 ♖f8-+) 23.♘fxd4 exd4 24.exd4 ♗f3! 25.♔f1 ♕h3+ 26.♔e1 ♖e8, and Black wins comfortably.

These lines illustrate the power of the bishop on the long diagonal, especially without its counterpart on the board.

21...♖xf3 (capture) 22.♗xf3

22.d4!? ♕f7 23.dxc5 ♘d8!∓ 24.♗xb7 ♘xb7 25.♗e1 dxc5-+.

22...♘xb4 (capture) 23.♗xb7

23.axb4 ♗xf3 24.♔f1 ♕h3+ 25.♔e1 ♕xh2↰.

23...♘xc2 (capture) 24.♗e4

White is also doomed after 24.♗xc8 ♕xc8 25.♖b2 ♘d4 26.exd4 exd4 27.♗e1 ♕h3!. White has a decisive weakness on the kingside light squares. Black is going to use this with an impending ...♘e5, followed by jumps to f3 or g4.

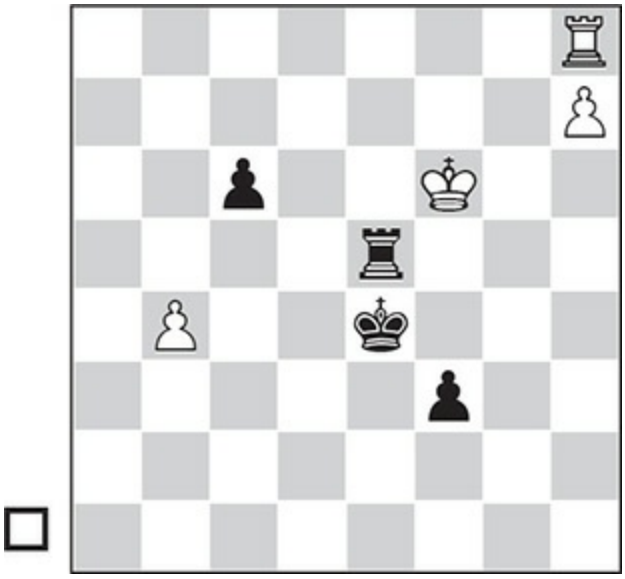
24...♘xa3 (capture) 25.♖b3 ♕a4 (threat) 0-1

Another fine double attack crowns the game for Black. Black used White's lack of coordination to develop a swift attack. There were tactical opportunities on both sides of the board.

Game 78 Level 3

Niclas Huschenbeth	2510
Evgeny Postny	2622

Germany Bundesliga 2011/12 (11)



56.♔g6?

This is the move played in the game, which is not correct.

A) 56.♖a8? f2 57.♖a1 ♖h5 58.♔g7 ♔e3 59.h8♕ ♖xh8 60.♔xh8 ♔e2 61.♔g7 f1♕ 62.♖xf1 ♔xf1 63.♔f6 ♔e2 64.♔e5 ♔d3 65.♔d6 ♔c4 66.♔xc6 ♔xb4=;

B) 56.♖g8!! (threat) looks counter-intuitive, as when Black plays ...f3-f2, White's rook cannot go to the first rank. In this sense, it would appear logical to go to a8 or d8, as the rook can then go to the first rank to stop the pawn. But 56.♖g8!! has a deeper idea behind it:

B1) If 56...♖f5+ 57.♔e6 f2 58.♖g4+! ♔d3 59.h8♕ f1♕ 60.♕d4+ (60.♕h7+-) 60...♔c2 61.♕e4++– picks the rook up with checks;

B2) 56...f2 57.♖g4+! (check) 57...♔e3 (57...♔d5 58.♖f4 – rook behind the passed pawn! – 58...♖h5 59.♔g7+-) 58.♔xe5 (capture) 58...f1♕

analysis diagram

59.♖e4+! (check) (59.h8♕?? ♕a1+, oops!) 59...♔d3 60.♖d4+! (blocking the a1-h8 diagonal with the rook before promoting the pawn) 60...♔e3 61.h8♕ and White wins with the extra rook, as Black does not have the ...♕a1 check anymore.

56...♖e6+! 57.♔g5

57.♔g7 f2 58.♖f8 ♖e7+ 59.♔g6 ♖xh7 60.♔xh7 ♔e3=.

57...♖e5+! 58.♔g6

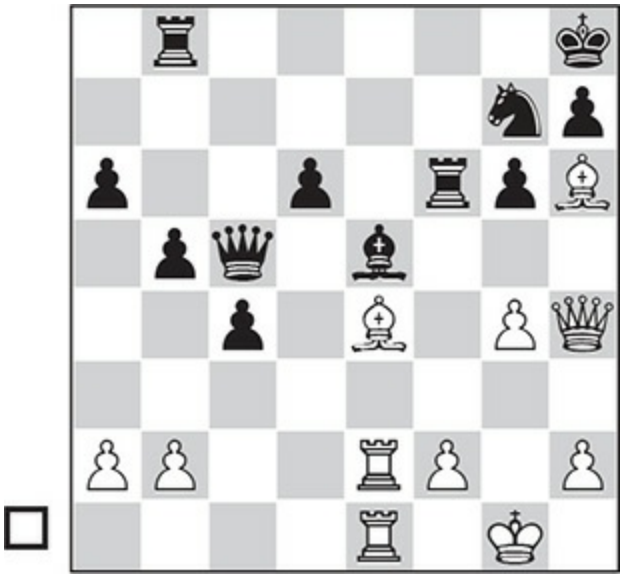
58.♔g4 ♖e7!=. White's rook is imprisoned.

58...♖e6+ 59.♔g5 ♖e5+ 60.♔g6 ½-½

Game 79 Level 3

Rainer Polzin	2469
Oleg Boguslavsky	2467

Germany Bundesliga 2011/12 (11)



28.♗e3! (threat)

Such moves are tough for many players, as it involves pieces going back from apparently strong forward positions.

A) 28.♗f4? ♖xf4 29.♗xg6 h5-+;

B) 28.♗xg7+? ♔xg7 29.g5 ♖f4 30.♕h6+ ♔g8 31.♗xg6 hxg6 32.♕xg6+ ♔f8 33.♕h6+ ♗g7-+. As can be seen here, this variation also involved all forcing moves, but it did not work in White's favour. It is still essential to see such forcing variations and eliminate them from the list of possibilities. Forcing moves are comparatively easier to analyse to a clear-cut conclusion.

28...♕c7

28...♗d4 29.♖d1! is an intermediate move with great power (29.♕xf6 ♗xf6 30.♗xc5 dxc5 and even though White is still certainly better, it will require considerably more effort to convert this) 29...♗xe3 30.♕xf6+-.

29.f4! (threat)

Loss of material is inevitable for Black.

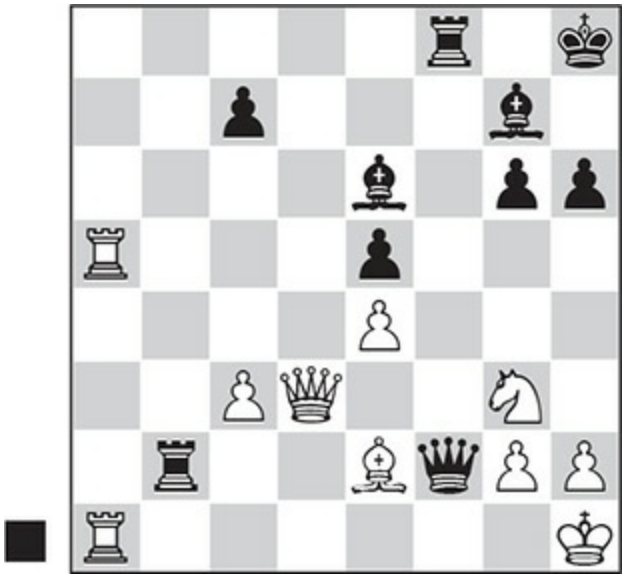
29...♖xf4

29...♗xf4? 30.♕xf6+-.

30.♗xf4 (capture) 30...♗xf4 31.♗xg6 (capture) 31...♕c5+ 32.♔g2 h6 33.♕f6 (threat) 33...♗g5 34.♖e8+ (check) 1-0

Game 80 Level 3

Irina Krush 2461
Fabiano Caruana 2767
Reykjavik 2012 (3)



34...♗g4! (threat) 35.♖f1!?

A) 35.♖5a2 ♗xe2 36.♖xb2 ♗xd3-+;

B) 35.♗f1 ♗h3!-+ (threat).

35...♕xe2! (capture)

A) 35...♗xe2?! 36.♖xf2 ♖xf2 37.♘xe2 ♖fxe2 38.♖a1 ♖xg2 and Black has nothing more than sufficient compensation;

B) 35...♖xe2? 36.♖xf2 ♖fxf2 37.h4! (clearing the back rank and getting ready to launch a counterattack on the black king with the major pieces; 37.♘xe2? ♗xe2 38.♕d8+ ♖f8) 37...♖d2! 38.♖a8+ ♔h7 39.♕c4 h5 40.♕g8+ ♔h6 41.♖e8 (threatening 42.♖e7) 41...♖d1+ 42.♔h2 ♖d7±. Black has been put on the defensive;

C) 35...♕b6? was seen in the game, when 36.♖a6! could have equalised.

36.♖xf8+

36.♘xe2 ♗xe2! (capture) (36...♖xf1+ 37.♘g1 ♖bb1 38.♕e3, and White is completely tied up) 37.♖xf8+ ♗xf8-+.

36...♗xf8 (capture) 37.♘xe2 ♗xe2!-+ (threat and capture) 38.♕e3 ♖b1+ (check) 39.♕g1 ♖xg1+ (check) 40.♔xg1 ♗d3

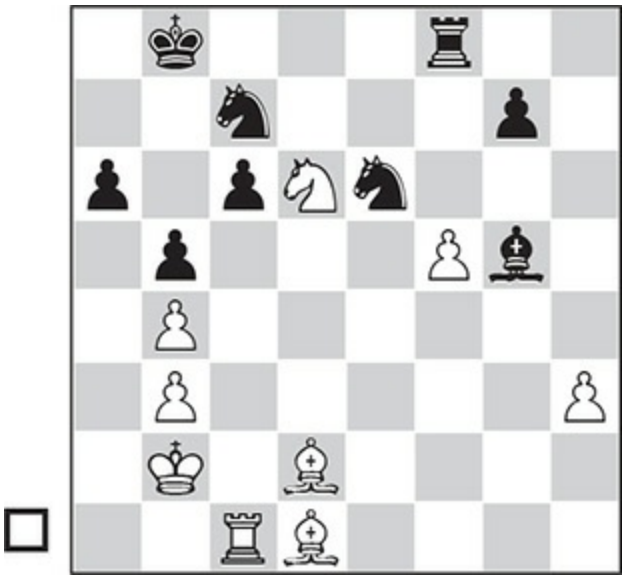
40...♗d6-+.

41.♖xe5 ♗d6 42.♖e8+ ♔g7 43.♔f2 ♔f7 44.♖a8 ♗xe4 0-1

Game 81 Level 3

Vasif Durarbayli	2543
Chanda Sandipan	2595

Cappelle-la-Grande 2012 (8)



49.♖xc6! (capture)

49.♗xg5?! ♘xg5 50.♖xc6 ♘d5 51.♔a3 ♖h8⇋; 49.fxe6?! ♗xd2 50.♖xc6 (50.e7 ♗xc1+ 51.♔xc1 ♖h8 52.♗g4 ♘e8-+) 50...♘xe6∞.

49...♗xd2?

49...♘d5 50.fxe6! (capture) (50.♗f3?! ♗f6+; 50.♗xg5?! ♘xg5 51.♔a3 ♖h8!⇋ or 51.♖xa6 ♖f6!∞) 50...♗xd2

analysis diagram

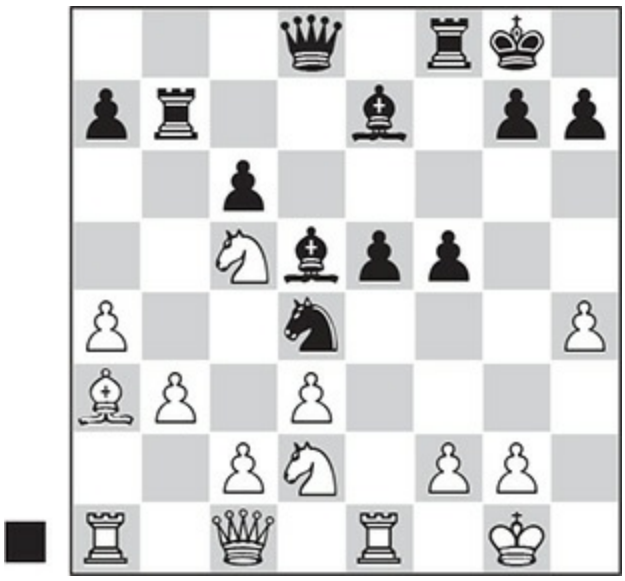
51.♘f7!, with the threat of 52.♖d6, winning lots of material and cutting off the black rook from a counter-attack: 51...♗xb4 52.♗f3 (threat) 52...♘e7 53.♖b6+! (check) (53.♖xa6?!±) 53...♔c7 (53...♔c8 54.♗e4; Black is completely paralysed, and White can gradually bring the king up) 54.♖b7+ check 54...♔c8 55.♖a7!+-.

50.♖b6+ (check) 50...♔a7 51.♖b7+ (check)
51...♔a8 52.♗f3! (threat) 52...♘d4 53.♗h1 (threat) 1-0

Game 82 Level 3

Michael Oratovsky	2521
Lazaro Bruzon	2691

Catalunya tt 2012 (7)



The position appears complicated at first glance, with threats on both sides of the board. But upon closer inspection, we can see that there are no minor pieces in front of White's king, which in most cases is an open invitation for a frontal attack from the opponent.

21...♗xh4! (capture)

21...♗xc5 22.♗xc5∞.

22.♘xb7

22.♘f1 ♗xf2+! 23.♔xf2 ♕h4+ 24.♔g1 ♖f6, and Black's attack is just too strong; 22.g3 f4 opens up the kingside completely.

22...♗xf2+! (check)

22..♕g5 is too slow and allows White to put up a fight with a counter-sacrifice: 23.♘e4! ♘f3+ 24.♔f1 ♕g4 25.♗xf8! (White just removes as many units as possible from the attacking side) 25...♘h2+ 26.♔g1 ♘f3+ 27.♔f1 and Black has nothing more than a draw.

23.♔xf2 ♕h4+ (check) 24.♔g1 ♕g3 (threat)

24...♗xg2! 25.♔xg2 ♖f6 also leads to the same conclusion; White is horribly exposed on the kingside.

25.♖e4

Desperate measures, but it's too late.

25.♘e4 fxe4 *(*25...♘f3+ 26.♔f1 fxe4 27.♗xf8 exd3-+) 26.♗xf8 e3-+.

25...fxe4 (capture) 26.♕e1 ♕g4! (threat) 27.dxe4

27.♗xf8 e3-+.

27...♘e2+ (check) 28.♕xe2 ♕xe2 (capture) 29.♗xf8 ♕xd2 (capture) 30.exd5 ♕d4+! (check) 31.♔h2 ♕xa1-+ 32.d6 ♕d4 33.♗e7 e4 34.♘a5 ♕e5+ 35.♔g1 e3 0-1

CHAPTER 5

Common mistakes chess players make while calculating variations

1. Not being able to visualise the position in the mind

In the many books that have been written about calculation, visualisation is one of the least-understood and primarily-ignored aspects. Surprisingly, nothing much has been written about the importance of improving visualisation skills. It is assumed that since strong players can visualise well and calculate well, everyone else can do so too. The ability to visualise ahead is one of the basic requirements to calculate well. To see much farther ahead, we need to have a good visualisation ability. The farther from the starting position a player can go, the better his calculation skill will be. Without making progress on visualisation skills, it is impossible to make progress in calculation skills.

The player who can see much more ahead than the opponent will have the advantage in the calculation process. Of course, here, a critical requirement is seeing ahead ‘correctly’ without making mistakes!

Imagine the plight of a person who has short-sightedness. For him, the distant objects appear blurry, while nearby objects appear normal. Similarly, a well-trained mind can see much farther while calculating variations in chess. An untrained mind will find it impossible to see beyond a point, as the position becomes blurry with each passing move. It is easy for many players to get confused about where each pawn and piece is placed further along the analysis. After a piece or pawn is exchanged off the board during the analytical process, they still see that piece or pawn in their mind. Such mistakes are widespread at the upcoming player level.

It is essential to understand that we can improve our visualisation with

proper training. The better the visualisation, the better the chances of finding a correct move farther down the line.

If I cannot see the position in my mind, what chance do I have to find a correct move in that position? What are the chances that I could calculate longer or accurate variations if my visualisation skills are limited?

Self-test: Take the notation of a game without analysis, read the moves and try to visualise the position in your mind while doing so. We will realise that we cannot visualise the pieces and pawns clearly beyond a certain point. The position becomes blurry and confusing, and we start imagining things incorrectly. For most amateur players, this is a significant problem. They lose track of the position very quickly. If you can visualise without serious difficulties, try to follow a game with few variations and sub-variations in your mind. In this way, you can find out how good or how bad you are at this process. Accordingly, solve puzzles by working out variations in your mind without moving pieces, and making it progressively more challenging in your training.

Visualisation skills are something that can and must be improved with training.

Solution: Solve easy puzzles at first, without moving pieces on the board, and graduate slowly to positions with multiple but easy variations, and finally to more challenging positions with multiple and long variations. Repeating moves verbally in the mind helps to visualise better. Whenever we forget the position or lose track of it while calculating, we can try to start from the beginning of the position, and go one move at a time. We will be able to visualise the final position in our variation better than before. While seeing games, try to analyse a few moves ahead in your mind and then see the game's move. In this way, you train yourself to see ahead, and it will improve your visualisation skills.

Try to visualise the variations in this game in your head. See for yourself how you fare.

Game 83 Level 3

Ramesh RB	2443
GB Joshi	2305

Kolkata 2000 (4) (analysis)

TASK 1: *Find the correct way to continue. Time to think: 10 minutes.*

18...♖g6!

18...♖xf8? 19.♘c5 ♕c8 20.♘xe6 ♕xe6 21.♗xc6 ♗xc6 22.♖e3± (22.♖xe5?! ♕g6 23.♖g5 ♕f6⇆) 22...♕g6?! 23.♘h4+-.

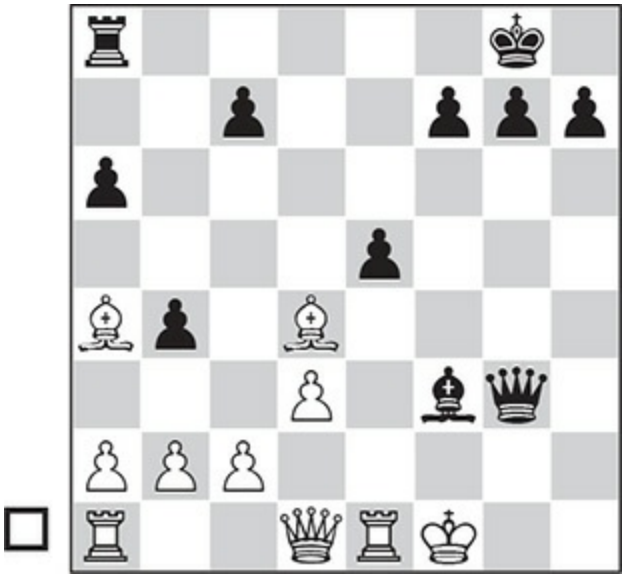
19.♘g3!

19.♘eg5? ♘xh3+! 20.gxh3 ♕xh3-+.

19...♖xf8!?

19...♘xh3+!? 20.gxh3 ♕xh3 21.♗c5! (21.♖e4 is not very ambitious: 21...♖xg3+ 22.fxg3 ♕xg3+ 23.♔f1 ♘d4 24.♘xd4 ♕h3+!=, with a draw by perpetual check) 21...♘d4 22.♗xd4 ♖xg3+ 23.fxg3 ♕xg3+ 24.♔f1 ♗xf3.

Now White should be very careful to not get into a worse position, as Black's pieces are getting active and White's king doesn't feel very safe either.



analysis diagram

TASK 2: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

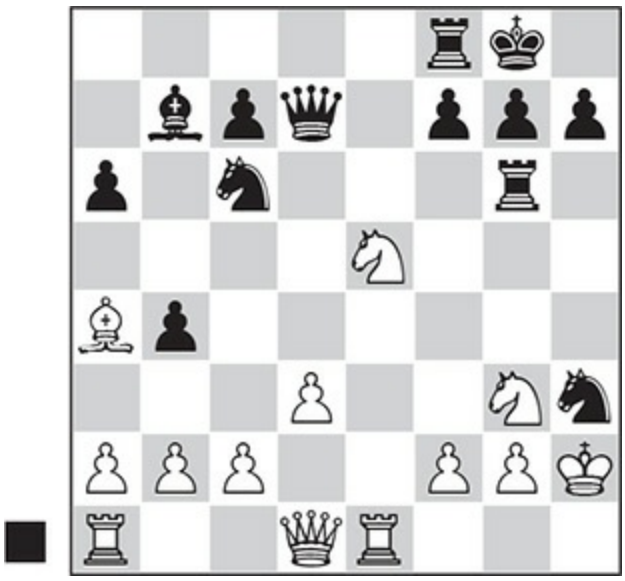
25.♖e2! (25.♕d2?? ♕h3+ 26.♔f2 ♕h2+ 27.♔e3 ♕f4+ 28.♔f2 ♕xd2+-+) 25...exd4 (despite his extra rook, it is not easy for White to untangle) 26.♕d2 ♕h3+! 27.♖g2 a5!? 28.♕g5 g6 29.♔g1 h6! 30.♕g3 ♗xg2 31.♕xg2 ♕e3+! 32.♕f2 ♕g5+ 33.♔h2 (33.♔f1?? ♖a6!-+) 33...c5, with a very complex position that the computer feels is balanced.

20.♘xe5 ♘xh3+!?

20...♕d5!? is another approach for Black: 21.♗xc6 ♖xc6! (21...♗xc6? 22.♖e4!±) 22.♖e4 ♖f6∞.

21.♔h2!

21.gxh3?! allows 21...♖xg3+! 22.fxg3 ♕d4+ 23.♔f1! ♘xe5 24.♕e2 ♘f3 25.♕f2 ♕xb2! 26.♗b3 g6∓ White is still under a lot of pressure.



TASK 3: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

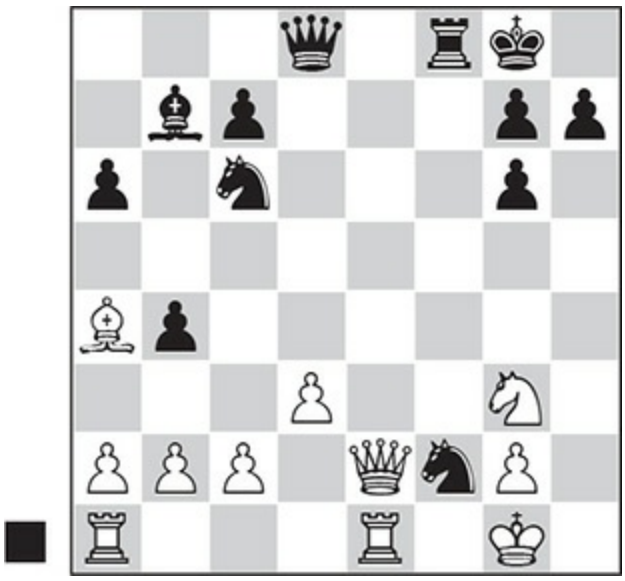
21...♕d8!

21...♕d6? 22.♘xg6 ♘xf2 23.♘xf8 ♘xd1 24.♖e8! h5 25.♖xd1 h4 26.♘g6+ ♔h7 27.♘xh4+-.

22.♘xg6

22.gxh3!? ♕d4!? 23.♕f3! ♘xe5 24.♕xb7 ♕xf2+ 25.♕g2 ♘f3+ 26.♔h1 ♕xg3 27.♕xg3 ♖xg3 28.♖e3! g5! 29.♗c6! ♖xh3+ 30.♔g2 g4 (the point of 28....g5) 31.♗xf3 ♖xf3 32.♖xf3 gxf3+ 33.♔xf3 and despite the extra pawn, the position is balanced, as Black's pawns are scattered all over the board and White's pieces are better coordinated.

22...♘xf2 23.♕e2 fxg6 24.♔g1!



TASK 4: *Find the critical continuation for Black. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

24...♘h3+!

24...♘d4? 25.♕e7 ♘h3+ 26.♔h2!+-.

25.gxh3

25.♔h1? ♘f4-+.

25...♘d4 26.♕e3 ♘f3+ 27.♔f2!

27.♔f1? ♕h4-+.

27...♘d4+ 28.♔g1=

Crazy variations, but ultimately both sides keep the balance with accurate play. In modern chess, the defensive and calculating skills at the higher level is so good that many of them can play at this level in such complex positions. It makes sense for aspiring players to expose themselves to such complex situations in training, to better equip themselves and deliver when the need arises.

2. The player does not see forcing moves

Many players at the upcoming level begin by analysing quiet moves that are not forced right from the beginning. Such a manner of thinking is one of the most common mistakes lower-rated players make while calculating variations. They start with a modest move, and waste precious time and

energy trying to analyse it. None of the following moves will be forced either. Still, they spend a lot of time trying to make sense of the quiet move.

We should not reject forcing moves without a valid reason. Our fears, discomfort, dislike for complications, risk aversion, etc., should not be a reason to ignore forcing moves.

The related problem is stopping the analysis of a variation too early when forcing moves are still possible. This happens due to a lack of proper training in analysing forcing moves. We tend to get carried away by our idea and desperately want to believe we found the correct solution to the problem. As a result, we stop our analysis at the first opportunity and evaluate the position as per our expectations.

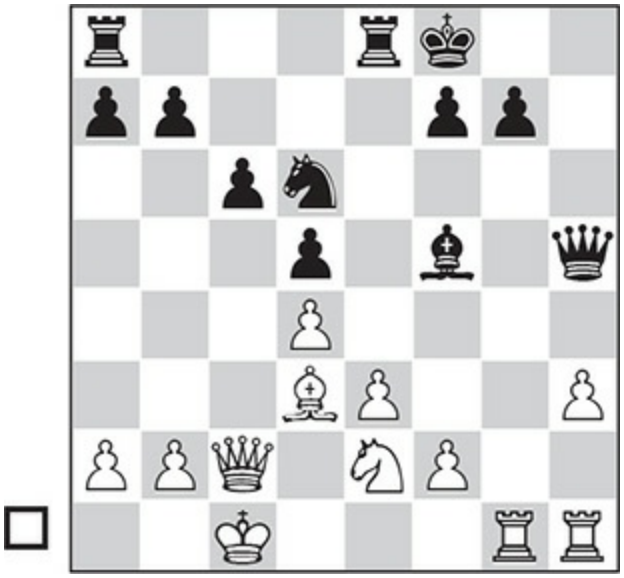
Solution:
Keep going until the forcing moves come to an end or the assessment is obvious.

Forcing moves are checks, captures, threats, and pawn breaks (CCTP). Always give preference to seeing and analysing forcing moves while calculating. If none of the forcing moves achieves our objective, we can then consider quiet moves in our analysis. Forcing moves cause our opponent to react in a particular manner. Forcing moves are easier to analyse than subtle moves.

It is imperative to become good at this in the early stage of our chess career. When multiple forcing moves are available, it makes sense to start with the move that tries to exploit the drawback of our opponent's previous move.

Let's have a look at a few examples.

Game 84 Level 1
Radoslaw Wojtaszek 2717
Mads Andersen 2585
Germany Bundesliga 2019/20 (4)



TASK 1: *Calculate a forced sequence of moves to reach a clearly better position for White. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

There are some interesting features to be observed in this position. Castling has happened on opposite sides. This always means that king safety is an even more important feature than usual. In this position, for example, the fact that the g-file is directly open against Black's king is a very important factor. Black does not have a similar target on the side of White's king.
Coming to the tactical features of the position, we can observe that the knight on d6 is loose, and it in turn supports the relatively unstable bishop on f5. Apart from this, Black's queen on h5 can provide tempos for developing an attack.

21.♕c5! (threat)

21.♘g3? ♗xd3 22.♘xh5 ♗xc2 23.♔xc2= (23.♘xg7?? ♗e4-+).

21...♗xd3

21...♖ad8? 22.♘g3+-.

22.♕xd6+ (check) 22...♔g8 23.♘f4 (threat) 23...♕h7 24.♘xd3 (capture) 24...♕xd3 25.♖xg7+! (check) 25...♔xg7 26.♖g1+ (check) 26...♔h7 27.♕f6+- (threat) 27...♕c4+ 28.♔d2 ♕b4+ 29.♔e2 ♕f8 30.♕f5+ ♔h6 31.♕f6+ ♔h7 32.♖g5 ♕h6 33.♕xf7+ ♔h8 34.♖h5 ♕xh5+ 35.♕xh5+

The task of calculation ends here. Note that each of the moves until here were forcing (either a check, a capture or a threat). It is an impressive sight –

White started by means of threats and drove Black's pieces away from his king, and exploited the weakness of Black's king position to win material and with it the game. Another important feature is to judge this position of queen plus pawns against the opponent's pair of rooks as winning. The exposed position of Black's king and the compactness of White's counterpart play a significant role in this.

35...♔g7 36.♕g5+ ♔f7 37.♕f5+ ♔e7 38.h4 ♔d6 39.h5 ♖e7 40.♔f3 ♔c7 41.♕g5 ♖f8+ 42.♔g4

White's plan of bringing up his king to help in the task of pawn promotion ultimately decides the game in his favour.

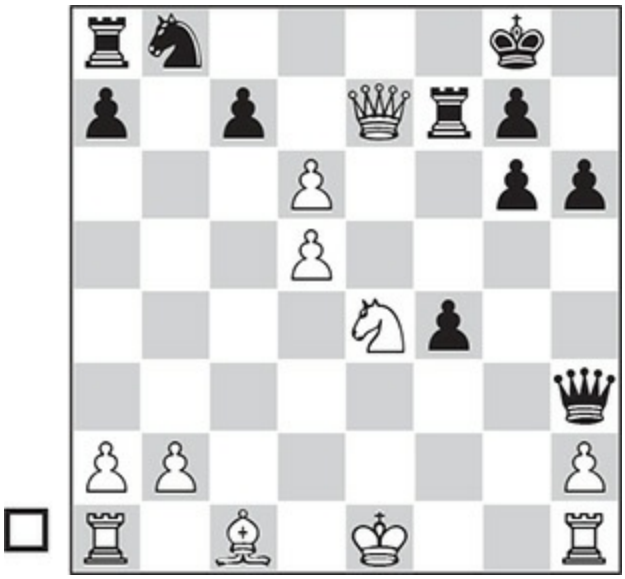
42...♖ee8 43.♔h4 ♖g8 44.♕f6 ♔b6 45.h6 ♖g1 46.♔h5 ♖eg8 47.♕h4 ♖h8 48.f4 ♔c7 49.f5 ♔d7 50.♕h2 ♖f1 51.♕h3 ♖g1 52.f6+ ♔d8 53.♕h2 ♖hg8 54.♕b8+ ♔d7 55.♕xb7+ ♔d8 56.♕e7+ ♔c8 57.♕g7 1-0

White used the tactical and positional features of the position to develop an attack against the opponent's king and in turn win material. Once he won material, he realised it with good and accurate technique.

Game 85 Level 1

Alexei Fedorov	2645
Narayanan Neelakantan	2230

Kolkata 1999 (3)



TASK 1: *Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

In this position, White's king seems devoid of pawn cover and weak. So, the fact that it is White's move and he has queen and knight in striking distance against his opponent's king is important. Also, we note that Black's queenside is completely undeveloped.

24.♕e8+ (check) 24...♖f8 25.♘f6+! (check) 25...gxf6 26.♕xg6+ (check) 26...♔h8 27.♖g1! (threat) 1-0

27...♕h4+ (27...♕d7 28.♕xh6+ ♕h7 29.♕xf8++-) 28.♔d1+-.

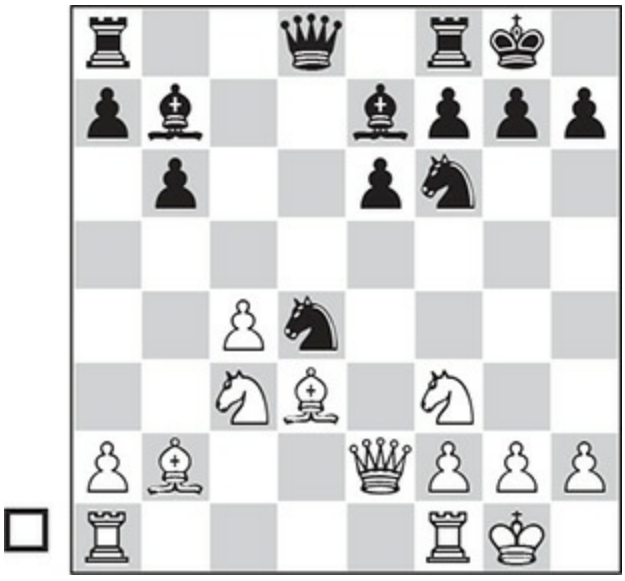
White completely destroyed Black's pawn cover in front of his king with a series of forcing moves. Added to this, White's king remained completely open, but Black's pieces lacked coordination to trouble him even a little, while White managed to weave a mating web!

Game 86 Level 1

Grels Linqvist

Antti Pihlajasalo 2190

Finland tt 1996 (5)



TASK 1: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

Black's queen walks into the firing line of White's dark-squared bishop.

White’s queen, both his bishops and the knight can join in an attack against the opponent’s king using tempo gainers on the queen:

13.♘xd4 (capture) 13...♕xd4 14.♘d5! (threat) 14...♕c5 15.♗xf6! (capture) 15...gxf6

If 15...♗xf6, perhaps the simplest option is 16.♕e4! (threat) 16...g6 17.♘xf6+ (check) 17...♔g7 18.♕xb7 (capture) although also winning is 16.♕h5! h6 17.♘xf6+ gxf6 18.♕xh6 f5 19.♖ae1! ♕c6 20.♗e4! fxe4 21.♕g5+ ♔h7 22.♖e3!+-.

16.♘xe7+ (check)

White cannot afford to play 16.♕h5 f5 17.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 18.♖ae1 ♕f6 19.♖e3 ♖fd8 20.♖h3 ♔f8.

16...♕xe7 17.♕g4+ (check) 17...♔h8 18.♕h4 (threat) 1-0

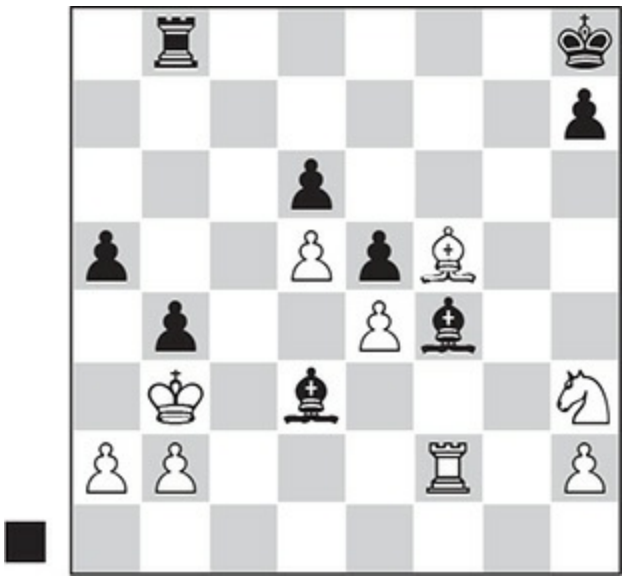
Black cannot stop mate other than by giving up his queen. This pattern of the pawn on f6 being pinned against a queen on e7 is common and is a key factor for victory here.

Game 87 Level 2

Joao De Souza Mendes

Bobby Fischer

Mar del Plata 1959 (4)



Black has the pair of bishops. A keen observer would find that White’s king

safety is a bit dodgy as well. This also gives a clue as to the direction in which the play will likely go. Opening up lines is a good way to increase the efficiency of the bishops and rook:

35...a4+! (check)

Inverting the order of moves with 35...♗e3! also works here:

A) 36.♖g2 a4+ (check) 37.♔xa4 b3 (pawn break) 38.axb3 ♗c5 39.b4 ♖xb4+ 40.♔a5 ♖b8 41.♔a4 ♗c4. Although slightly longer, the ideas are similar to the main game and lead to a win as well;

B) 36.♖f3 a4+ 37.♔xa4 b3! (pawn break) *(*37...♗c2+ 38.b3±*)* 38.axb3 (38.♖xe3 bxa2 39.♖e1 ♗b1-+; 38.a3 ♗b5+ 39.♔xb3 ♗e2+-+ or 39.♔a5 ♗d2+-+*)* 38...♖a8+ 39.♔b4 ♗d2#. The pawn break also had the added advantage of taking away escape squares from White's king.

36.♔xa4 b3! (pawn break) 37.axb3

37...♗e3! (threat) 38.♖f3

38.♖g2 ♗c5 39.b4 ♖xb4+ 40.♔a5 ♖b8 41.♔a4 ♗c4-+. As also in the main line, the bishops and rook will checkmate White's king.

38...♖a8+! (check) 39.♔b4 ♗d2# (checkmate)

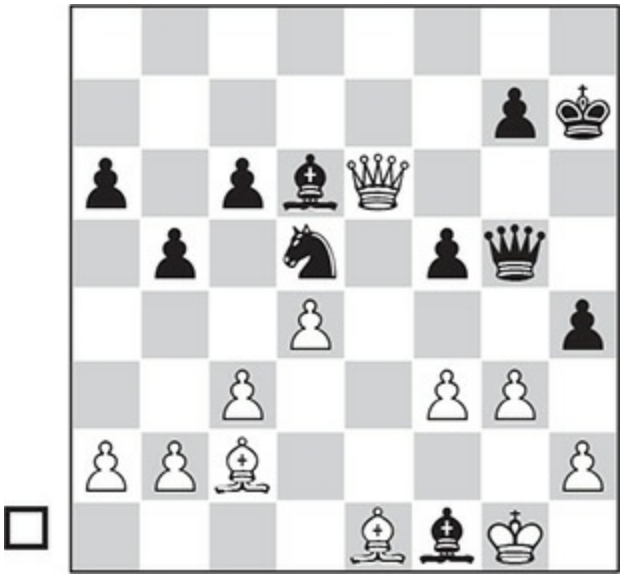
A couple of pawn sacrifices magnified the power of the long-range pieces in Black's camp, namely the bishops and the rook. Combining this with White's helpless king on the queenside, Black finished the game aesthetically.

In the next example, both sides are going for an attack against their opponent's king. So, tempo is very important.

Game 88 Level 2

Emil Sutovsky	2651
Andreas Heimann	2428

Kallithea 2008 (7)



White finishes the game without giving Black any time to create any threats of his own:

27.♗xf5+ (check) 27...g6

27...♔h8 28.♕e8+ ♗f8 29.♕xf8#.

28.♕f7+! (check) 28...♔h6

If 28...♔h8, both 29.♗xg6! (capture) 29...♕h6 30.♔xf1 (capture) and 29.♗e6! (threat) 29...♕d8 30.♔xf1 are winning.

29.♗d2! (threat)

A) 29.♕g8?? is not mate, due to 29...gxf5 30.♕h8+ ♔g6-+;

B) 29.♗xg6! reaches the same outcome: 29...♕xg6 30.♗d2+! ♗f4 31.♗xf4+ ♘xf4 32.♕xf4++-.

29...♗f4

29...♘e3 30.♗xg6+-.

30.♕f8+ (check)

30.♗xg6 is more complex, but wins also: 30...♗e3+ 31.♗xe3 ♕xe3+

A) 32.♔h1?? will backfire for White: 32...h3 (32...♕e2? 33.♕h7+ ♔g5 34.f4+! ♘xf4 35.gxf4+ ♔xf4 36.♕xh4++-; 32...♕f2 33.♕h7+ ♔g5 34.f4+ ♘xf4 35.gxf4+ ♕xf4 36.♕h5+ ♔f6 37.♗h7±; 32...♕e7 33.♕xe7 ♘xe7 34.♗c2) 33.♕h7+ ♔g5 34.♕h5+ (34.f4+ ♘xf4 35.gxf4+ ♕xf4!-+) 34...♔f6 35.♕f5+ ♔e7, and Black's king escapes;

B) 32.♔xf1 h3 33.♕h7+ ♔g5 34.♕h5+ ♔f6

analysis diagram

35.f4! (vacating the f3-square to escape to the kingside with the king) 35...♕c1+ 36.♔e2! (36.♔f2? ♕d2+ 37.♔f3 ♕d1+=) 36...♕xb2+ 37.♔f3 (now Black cannot give check on d1 with his queen, and that was the point of the route taken by the white king on the last few moves) 37...♕g2+ 38.♔g4 ♕e2+ 39.♔xh3 ♕xh5+ 40.♗xh5 ♘xc3 41.g4+-.

30...♔h7 31.♗e6! (threat) 1-0

White used forcing moves, like never removing his foot from the accelerator, until he won.

3. Not making a list of candidate moves before or while analysing

Many players start analysing the first move that comes to their mind, their first attraction, and do not look for other alternatives available in the position before having taken a plunge into the analysis of their preferred move. There is nothing wrong with this approach per se. When things do not turn out the way we want them to be in our analysis, we should return to these exact moments to find better alternatives.

The problem with this approach is that once we are deeply committed to a move, we spend significant time and energy trying to make it work. We raise our hopes, only to realise later that our initial presumption was not correct. Under the circumstances, it is not easy to regain our composure and start the process again with a different starting point.

To precisely avoid such a scenario, it makes sense to identify the moments when our moves are forced in our analysis. The moves we are considering for analysis are not forced. We should realise that there could be other possibilities, and, with that realisation, analyse the moves that look promising. When things go wrong, we go back to those exact moments when branches are possible. Now, it makes sense to make a list of candidate moves and then continue our analysis.

Imagine travelling by car from city X to city Y (in pre-Google Maps/GPS days) without knowing the exact route. Imagine we are travelling on the main road. If the road is going straight all the way, there is no way we can make a

mistake. But when there are branches on the main road, you can also take a right or left turn; then, at that moment, we should hesitate because we have several options before us. If we choose the wrong road, we might have to come back to this point and try the other options.

Imagine we did not even realise that we could either take a left or right turn or go straight at one point. We went straight ahead and hit a dead end. We realise we made a mistake somewhere, but we have no way of knowing where to correct our error since, in our perception, the road was a straight line without any turns. If we have mentally noticed that we had options at some point, it is possible to go back to that exact place and try other options. Similarly, if we know that we had choices at certain moments, we can go back to those very moments and try different options.

A few important points to remember here are:

a) We should make a list of candidate moves not only for ourselves but for our opponent as well.

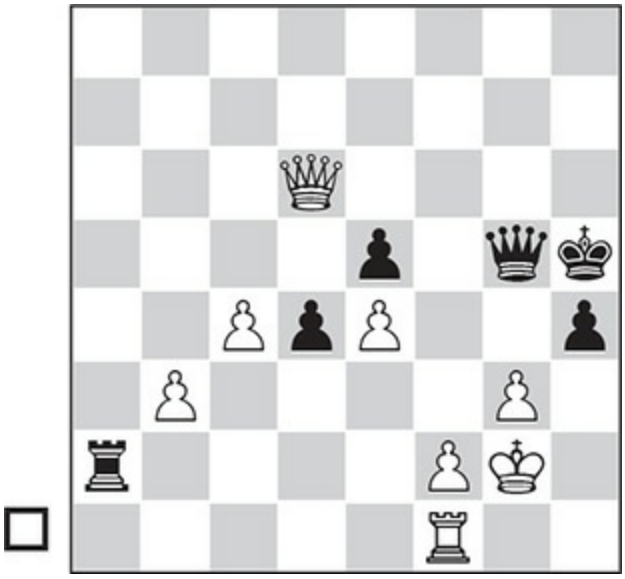
b) It is not enough to make a list of candidate moves at the beginning of a variation, but throughout the variation(s) when the moves are neither forced nor the only move.

Game 89 Level 4

Javokhir Sindarov	2537
Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa	2602

Moscow 2020 (7)

This is a battle between two promising young players in their early teens and already accomplished grandmasters. Both have huge potential and it remains to be seen how far they can go. Although the game ended in a draw, there were fascinating moments when things could have gone either way.



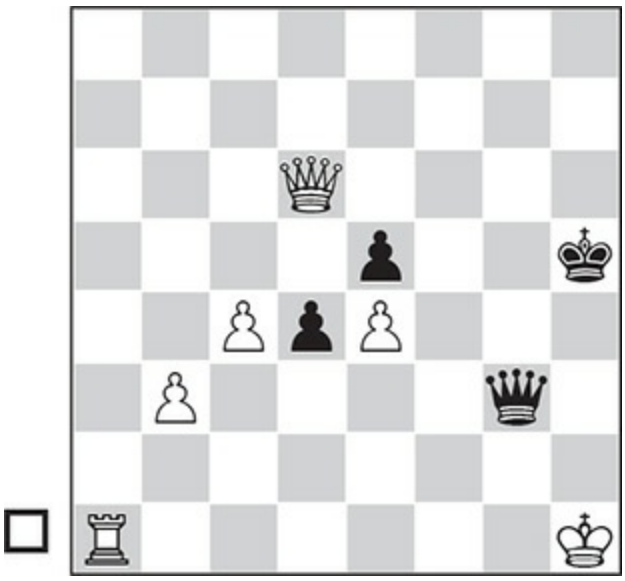
TASK 1: *Calculate as deeply as possible. Time to think: 10 to 15 minutes.*

33.♔g1??

In this position, White is much better if he can find the correct continuation, which Javokhir failed to do during the game, probably due to time trouble. He instinctively understood the king had to move, but chose the incorrect square.

A) 33.♕d7?? ♕xg3+ 34.♔h1 ♕f3+ 35.♔g1 ♕g4+ (the active king, rook and the two distant passed pawns give Black a winning advantage) 36.♕xg4+ ♔xg4 37.c5 ♔f3 38.b4 (38.c6 ♖c2) 38...d3-+;

B) 33.♔h1! hxg3 34.fxg3 (34.f4?? ♕h4+) 34...♖a1!? (the critical defensive idea that will demand very accurate play from White; 34...d3? 35.♖f5) 35.♖xa1 ♕xg3. White unfortunately is not able to give any checks and has to find a way out of the threatened perpetual check.



analysis diagram

TASK 2: *Find the only way for White to play for a win and calculate the consequences. Time to think: 10 minutes.*

B1) 36.♕f6 seems to create hurdles on Black's path to give checks, or at least the queen may be able to come back and interpose Black's checks at the right moment. But... 36...♕h3+ 37.♔g1 ♕g3+ 38.♔f1 ♕h3+ 39.♔f2 ♕h2+ 40.♔e1 ♕g3+ 41.♕f2 (if the king tries to go to the queenside, Black's queen can pursue it successfully due to the pawn on d4. As a result, White has to give back the extra rook and take his chances in the resulting king and pawn ending) 41...♕c3+ 42.♕d2 ♕xa1+ 43.♕d1+. This is the point of White's play, but... 43...♕xd1+ 44.♔xd1 ♔g5... this is a drawn pawn ending. Black has a protected passed pawn in the centre and his king will block White's queenside passed pawns. In the resultant position, White cannot make any progress, as his king will be tied to holding back the d-pawn: 45.c5 ♔f6 46.♔c2 ♔e6 47.♔d3 ♔d7 48.♔c4 ♔c6 49.b4 ♔c7 50.b5 ♔b7=;

B2) 36.♕a3!! ♕h3+ 37.♔g1 ♕g3+ 38.♔f1 ♕f3+ 39.♔e1 ♕xe4+ 40.♔d2 ♕e3+ 41.♔c2 ♕e2+ (41...d3+ 42.♔c3) 42.♔b1 d3 (we have reached a position in which Black will soon run out of checks and be

completely lost. Before that happens, Black includes one more unit into the action just when White's pieces are apparently lacking coordination and will need some time to get them to act together; 42...♕d1+ 43.♔a2 ♕d2+ 44.♕b2 ♕a5+ 45.♔b1 ♕e1+ 46.♕c1 ♕e4+ 47.♔b2+-) 43.♖a2 d2 44.♖xd2 ♕xd2, and now comes the critical move: 45.♕c1! (45.♕b2? ♕e3=; the e-pawn will advance and give sufficient counterplay for Black to hold the balance) 45...♕g2 46.c5. This pawn is much faster than Black's e-pawn and is well backed up by the queen.

33...hxg3

Now it is Black who is in the driver's seat, but again with very little time on the clock.

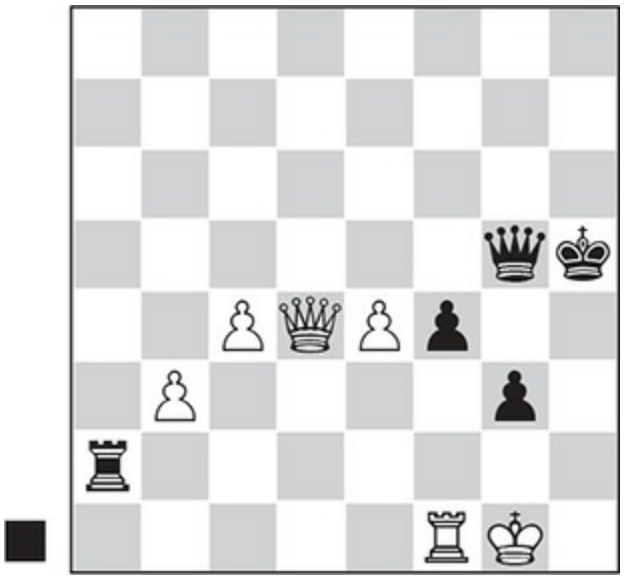
33...♖xf2? 34.♖xf2 ♕xg3+ 35.♖g2 will end in a perpetual check draw.

34.f4!?

This is a good way to complicate the game and probably the reason why Javokhir chose to go 33.♔g1, so that Black would not have the possibility to give ...♕h4 check when the king had gone to h1 earlier.

34...exf4 35.♕xd4!?

35.♖xf4 g2-+; 35.♕xf4 ♕xf4 36.♖xf4 d3-+.



The final critical moment in the game. The move Black plays here will decide the outcome, and unfortunately Pragg went astray:

TASK 3: *Time to think: 5 minutes.*

35...♖e2?

This allows an easy draw.

35...♖a8!! ensures that White will not find it easy to give checks to the black king. Black is doing well for the following reasons: his king is now comparatively safer, and his two passed pawns are more advanced and can advance further at the right moment, creating dangerous threats to White's king. White's passed pawns are currently not a worry for Black. White's rook is not doing much either. Black can slowly create a good cooperation between his pieces and then advance his pawns.

A) 36.♕d7 ♕c5+ (36...♕e5 37.♖d1) 37.♔h1 g2+! (a nice tactic to open up lines around the white king) 38.♔xg2 ♕g5+-+;

B) 36.♔g2 ♖d8 37.♕c3 (37.♖h1+ ♔g4 38.♕c3 ♖d2+!) 37...♖d2+! 38.♔g1 (38.♕xd2?? f3+-+) 38...♕c5 with mate to follow;

C) 36.♕d1+ ♔h4! 37.♕f3 ♕c5+! 38.♔h1 ♕e3! 39.♕xf4+ (39.♕xe3 fxe3, and the rook and pawn ending is completely lost for White: 40.♔g2 ♔g4 41.♖e1 ♖a2+ 42.♔g1 ♔f3 43.♖f1+ ♖f2 44.♖e1 e2-+) 39...♕xf4 40.♖xf4+ ♔h3-+;

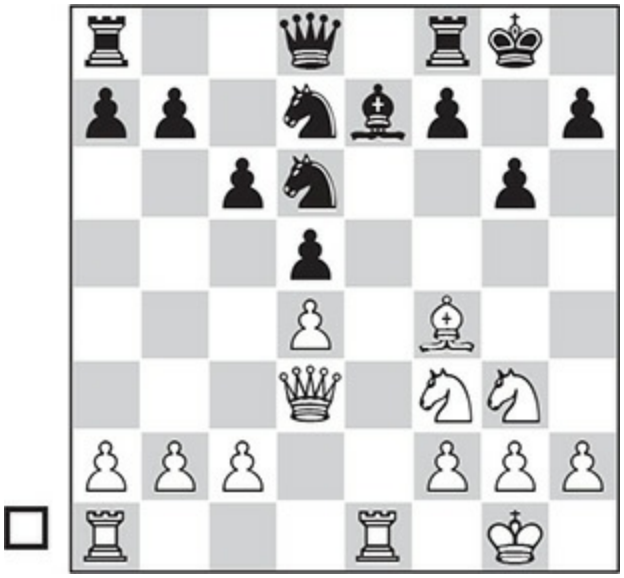
D) 36.e5 ♕h4 37.♕d2 f3-+.

36.♕h8+ ♔g4 37.♕c8+ ♔h4 38.♕h8+ ♔g4 ½-½

Game 90 Level 4

Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa	2507
Konstantin Landa	2613

Reykjavik 2018 (7)



15.♖e2?!

The knight on d6 is the key defensive piece from Black's point of view. So, White first takes steps to shake its stability.

A) 15.♕a3!

A1) 15...♘e4 16.♕b3 ♘xg3 17.hxg3 ♘b6 (17...b6 18.♖e2 ♗f6 19.♖ae1 ♕c8 20.g4!? – note how Black's pieces are stepping on each other's toes and have absolutely no coordination; White keeps gaining space and has various attacking ideas, such as c2-c4 and g4-g5 and infiltrating along the e-file) 18.a4, and Black faces an uphill task defending the b7-pawn;

A2) 15...♘c8 16.♕b3! ♕b6 (16...♘cb6 17.a4 a5 18.♖e2+-; 16...♘d6 17.♖e2±) 17.♕d3! ♕xb2? (17...♕d8 18.♖e2, and White calmly improves by doubling on the e-file now. Importantly, Black lacks coordination because of his knight on c8) 18.♘f5!! (while Black's pieces are caught napping on the other flank, White uses a sacrifice to get at Black's king) 18...gxf5 19.♖ab1 ♕a3 20.♕xf5+-.

B) Also possible, though not as strong, was 15.♕b3 ♘b6 16.a4 ♖e8 17.a5 ♘bc4 18.a6 b6±;

C) 15.h4 ♘f6 16.♘g5 ♕d7 17.♖e2 ♖fe8=.

15...♖e8 16.♖ae1 ♗f8 ½-½

The presence of the knight on d6 holds Black's position together.

In this game, Pragg played a move that looked obvious at first sight, but he

did not go deeply into the position. As a result, the best move in the position was not found.

A few reasons why upcoming players do not make a list of candidate moves are:

a) An inner fear that making a list of candidate moves could increase the complexity of the whole process.

b) As the complexity increases, the possibility of making mistakes increases too.

c) It could make the whole process time-consuming.

d) A feeling that when I analyse one variation, I make multiple mistakes. If I start seeing numerous variations, I will make many more mistakes. Let me see one variation and try to do this without committing errors.

e) The whole process is too confusing.

f) Some players resist any change; they feel more comfortable with the status quo.

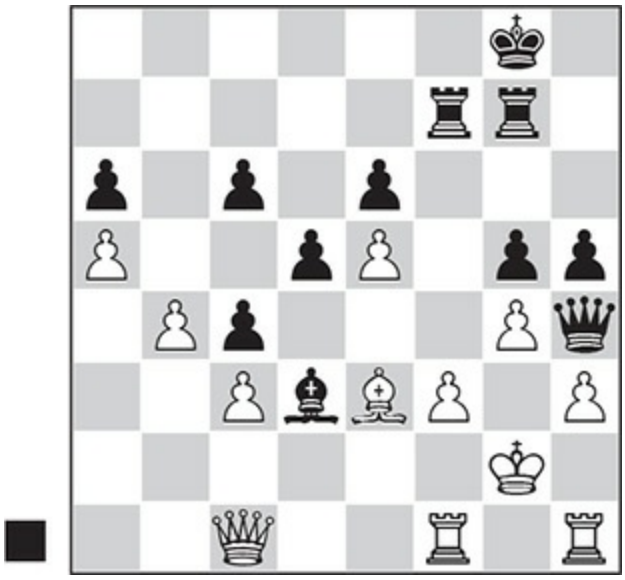
Solution:
Read more about it, try practising it, become better at it until it becomes a subconscious process. It is tough to master something when we are not ready to take the first step of trying to do it ourselves. For further reading on this issue, I would recommend John Nunn's book *Secrets of Practical Chess* and the chapter 'Wandering in the Jungle' by Michal Krasenkow in the book *Attack and Defence* by Mark Dvoretsky.

A related problem is that some players forget a move in the list they made some time ago! We need to keep our energy levels and concentration high throughout the game.

Calculate the following positions until the end with all its branches correct.

Game 91 Level 3
Jacek Tomczak 2614
Christian Bauer 2629
Batumi ol 2018 (5)

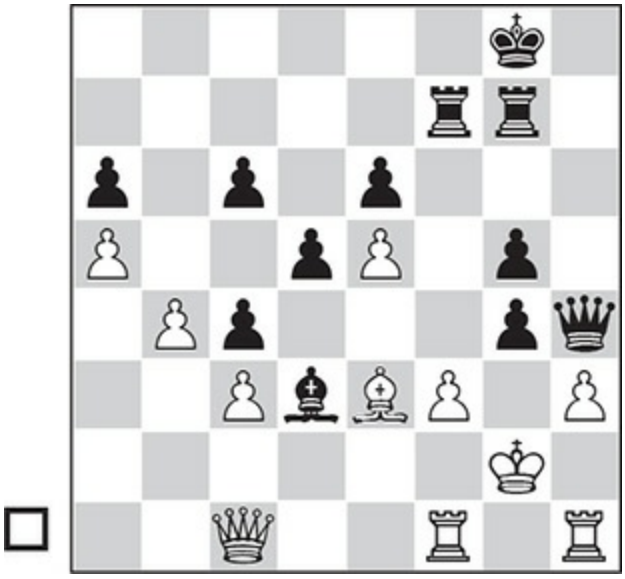
There are two main ways to train ourselves to improve our calculation.
One way that is very commonly followed by the majority of chess players is to take an interesting position and spend some time to analyse it. Usually, we see some interesting ideas, some interesting variations and sometimes we get the complete solution correctly too!
The only issue I have with this approach is that, many times, the truth is just a consequence and not the quest. The probability of making mistakes in our analysis with this method is much higher. We also limit ourselves to analysis that is lacking in depth at times. But this method has its own merits too. We constantly teach our mind how to calculate, making it stronger in the process.
The alternative method, which is my favourite, is to ruthlessly pursue the truth in the position. This means trying to push ourselves to the extreme, and trying to analyse as many variations as possible, and trying to squeeze every drop of juice out of the position.
For the second method, it will be efficient to do it with the help of a second or a coach. With this method, we analyse one complex position for a few hours, and in the process we improve our visualisation, calculation, concentration and durability.
It is better to use the first method of training on a daily basis and the second method of training once every few days, if finding a helper to assist is tough.



TASK 1: *Time to think: 10 minutes.*

As we see, Black's queen on h4 is in trouble.
Black had three forcing moves and an interesting alternative in the initial position.
The forcing moves are 33...hxg4, 33...♗xf1+ and 33...♖xf3, and the interesting fourth alternative suggested by many players is 33...♗e4. In the game, no doubt also due to a shortage of time on the clock, Black could not find the correct solution. But even with sufficient time, the resource is hard to find.

A) 33...hxg4?

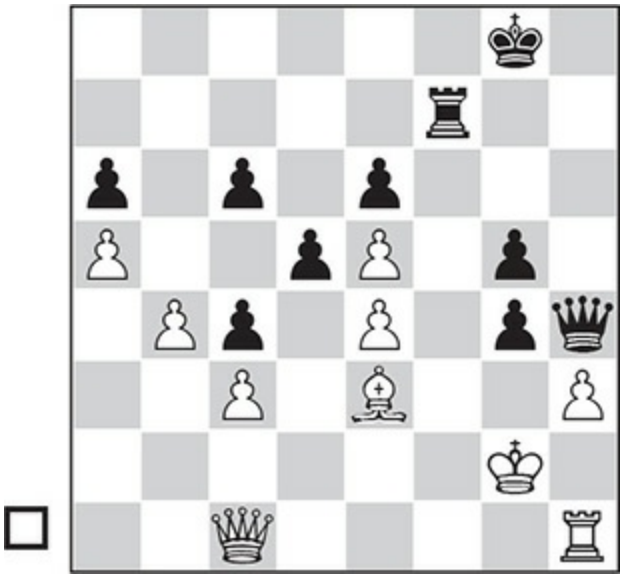


analysis diagram

TASK 2: *Refute 33....hxg4?. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

34.hxg4 ♖xf3 35.♖xf3 ♕xg4+ 36.♔f2 ♗e4 37.♕d1! (37.♖hh3 ♗xf3 38.♖xf3 ♕h4+ 39.♔g2 g4 40.♖g3 ♖h7 41.♕g1±) 37...♗xf3 38.♕xf3 ♖f7 39.♖h8+!+-, this is the key move in the whole variation!;

B) 33...♗e4? 34.fxe4 (34.♗f2? ♖xf3 35.♗xh4 ♖xc3+ 36.♔h2 ♖xc1-+) 34...hxg4 35.♖xf7! (a relevant sequence of moves needs to be found for White) 35...♖xf7 (35...gxh3+ 36.♔h2 ♖xf7 37.♖g1!+-)



analysis diagram

TASK 3: *Find the correct continuation for White. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

B1) 36.exd5! is one of the two resources available to White. If the player finds any one of them, it is good enough. But the important resources relevant to that choice should be found: 36...♖f3!? (36...gxh3+!? 37.♖xh3 ♕e4+ 38.♔h2 cxd5 39.♕e1!+-) 37.♕e1! (since the ♗f2 resource to control the g3-square is not available as in the 36.♕c2 line, this becomes essential) 37...♕h7 38.♗f2 ♕f5 39.h4 (39.hxg4 ♕xg4+ 40.♗g3 cxd5 41.♖f1+-) 39...♖d3 40.♕e2 and White wins;

B2) 36.♕c2! is a tough move to find. Its purpose is to play ♕g6 check after exd5 and also to play ♗f2, which is very critical as we will see: 36...dxe4!? (36...♖f3 37.♗f2! ♕h5 38.exd5+-) 37.♗f2! ♕h5 38.♕d2!+-, a very important consolidating move that establishes White's superiority without doubt.

C) 33...♗xf1+! 34.♕xf1 ♖h7! (this is probably the most difficult move to find; without it, finding the solution would not be possible; 34...♖f8 35.♕d1+-; 34...hxg4 35.hxg4 ♕xg4+ 36.fxg4 ♖xf1) 35.♗f2 ♖xf3!= (the second important shot, but many players considered 33...♖xf3 on the first

move, so it will not be so hard to find here) 36.♔xf3 hxg4+ 37.♔g2 (37.♔e2?? g3 38.♗c5 ♕e4+ 39.♔d2 ♖f7-+) 37...gxh3+ 38.♔h2 ♕f4+ 39.♗g3 ♕e4∞ (finally Black gets a position he can be satisfied with, after extreme effort no doubt!) 40.♖g1 ♖f7.

33...♖xf3?? 34.♖xf3 hxg4

34...♗e4 35.♗f2 ♗xf3+ 36.♔g1!+-.

35.♖g3 ♗e4+ 36.♔h2

It is all over now for Black.

36...♖h7

36...♗xh1 37.♖xg4+-.

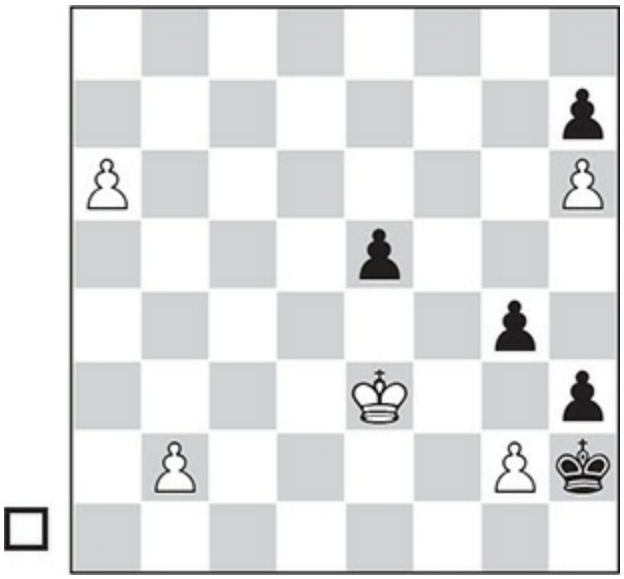
37.♖d1 ♖h5 38.♗c5 gxh3 39.♗e7 ♔f7 40.♗xg5 ♕xg3+ 41.♔xg3 1-0

Here is a study by Yochanan Afek based on his favourite underpromotion theme. A variety of different promotions are seen, and at various points a unique underpromotion works, making the study even more challenging. This is a good exercise in staying alert, apart from the aesthetic viewpoint, of course!

Game 92 Level 4

Yochanan Afek

Study, 1974



White to play and win

1.g3!

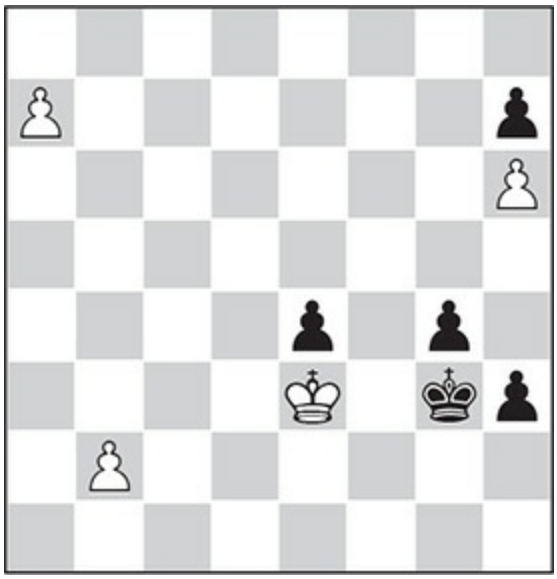
1.gxh3? g3=.

1...♔xg3

1...♔g1 loses without any fight after 2.a7 h2 3.a8♕ h1♕ 4.♕xh1+ ♔xh1 5.b4 ♔g2 6.b5 ♔xg3 7.b6 ♔h2 8.b7 g3 9.b8♕ g2 10.♕xe5++-.

2.a7 e4!

2...h2?! 3.a8♗! (the natural move 3.a8♕? does not work: 3...e4! 4.♕xe4 (4.♕b8+ ♔h3!=) 4...h1♕ 5.♕xh1 ends in a beautiful stalemate) 3...♔h3 4.♔f2 g3+ 5.♔f1. White's king and bishop have stopped Black's passed pawns, and the passed b-pawn will win the game easily for White.



3.a8♖!!

A typical Afek under-promotion!

A) 3.a8♕? h2 and now:

A1) 4.♕b8+ ♔h3! (4...♔g2?? 5.♕f4 h1♕ 6.♕xg4+ ♔f1 (6...♔h2 7.♕h4+ ♔g2 8.♕xh1+ ♔xh1 9.b4+-) 7.♕e2+ ♔g1 8.♕f2#) 5.♕b5 (5.♔f2 e3+ 6.♔xe3 h1♕) 5...h1♕ 6.♕h5+ ♔g3;

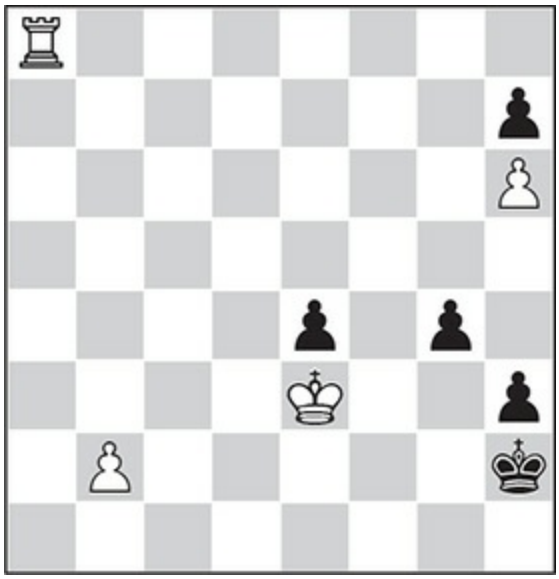
A2) 4.♕e8 h1♕ 5.♕e5+ ♔h4 6.♕e7+ ♔g3;

A3) 4.♕xe4 h1♕ 5.♕xh1=.

B) 3.a8♗? also backfires badly for White: 3...♔h2! 4.♗xe4 g3-+.

3...♔h2!

3...h2 4.♖a1 ♔g2 5.♔xe4 g3 6.♔f4! ♔f2 (6...♔h3 7.♔g5 g2 (7...♔g2 8.♔g4+-) 8.♖a3# is a creative mating pattern!) 7.♖h1! (this comes as a cold shower. It appeared as if Black's passed pawns were very strong and on the verge of queening, but White shows this is not the case at all!) 7...♔g2 8.♖c1! ♔f2 9.♖c2+ ♔g1 10.♔xg3 h1♘+ 11.♔f3 and this position is won even without any pawns on the board.



4.♖a7!

4.♖h8? ♔g2! 5.♖xh7 h2-+.

4...♔g2!

4...g3 5.♖xh7! g2 6.♖g7 g1♕+ 7.♖xg1 ♔xg1 8.h7 h2 9.h8♕ h1♕ 10.♕xh1+ ♔xh1 11.b4+-.

5.♔xe4!

The right move order is also very important as always. For example, 5.♖a1? does not work after 5...g3! 6.♔xe4 (6.b4 h2 7.♔f4 ♔h3 8.b5 g2) 6...♔f2! and Black wins (but not 6...h2? 7.♔f4+-).

5...g3 6.♔f4! h2

6...♔f2 7.b4+-.

7.♖a1 ♔f2

7...♔h3 8.♔g5+-.

8.♖h1! ♔g2 9.♖c1! ♔f2 10.♖c2

And White wins.

The way the rook and king took care of the opponent's advanced passed pawns was very admirable. This teaches us something about similar endgames with a rook against pawns. It is very important to see all the variations in our analysis by making a list of candidate moves at each turn for both White and Black wherever the moves are not forced. Otherwise, it is easy to miss some important variations in our analysis.

4. Some players leave out good moves while making a list, and don't find the main or critical idea behind the position

As a result, the player spends an excessive amount of time analysing moves that do not meet the position's requirements. Missing unexpected quiet moves and concepts that are too difficult to find are problems many players face. Missing moves in situations where the pieces go back suddenly is also standard even among solid players, for various reasons:

a) a lack of application on the part of the player in the process of identifying moves.

b) the strength of the player is not enough to meet the requirement of the position.

c) a lack of understanding of the position, and missing essential details.

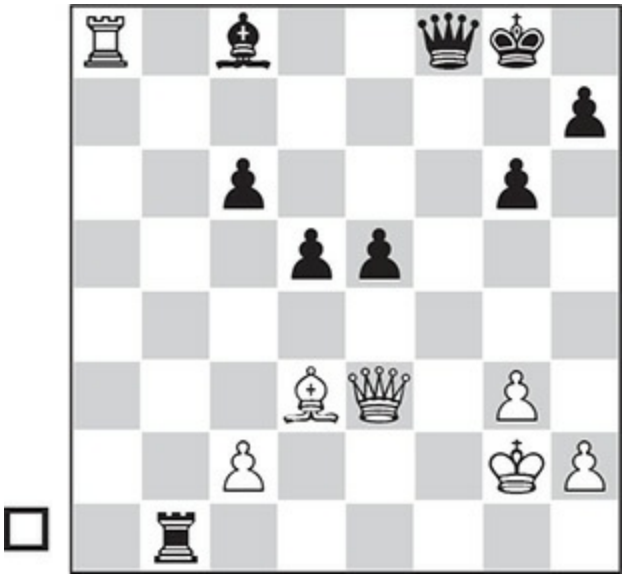
d) in our preparations, we were not exposing ourselves to a wide variety of situations during our practice at home.

e) haste and rushing into the process.

f) a lapse in concentration as a result of tiredness and lack of energy.

g) a lack of time.

Game 93 Level 2
Magnus Carlsen 2847
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov 2770
chess24.com 2021



TASK 1: *Find a powerful continuation for White. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

24.g4!!

Exploiting the pin along the eighth rank to the maximum. This is basically a prophylactic move that prevents Black from getting out of the deadly pin with a bishop check on h3. Once this possibility is prevented, the bishop will eventually be in big trouble.

Not 24.♕xe5? ♗h3+ 25.♔xh3 ♕xa8 26.♕e6+ ♔g7 27.♕e7+=.

24...e4

24...♖b4!

analysis diagram

25.h3! (the pin exploitation with ♗a6 cannot be stopped, so why not use the time to defend our pawn first?) 25...♖f4 26.♗a6 ♗xa6 27.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 28.♕xe5 ♗b5 29.h4±.

25.♗a6 ♗xa6 26.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 27.♕a3+ 1-0

Game 94 Level 4

Nils Grandelius	2691
Michael Adams	2694

Batumi 2019 (3)

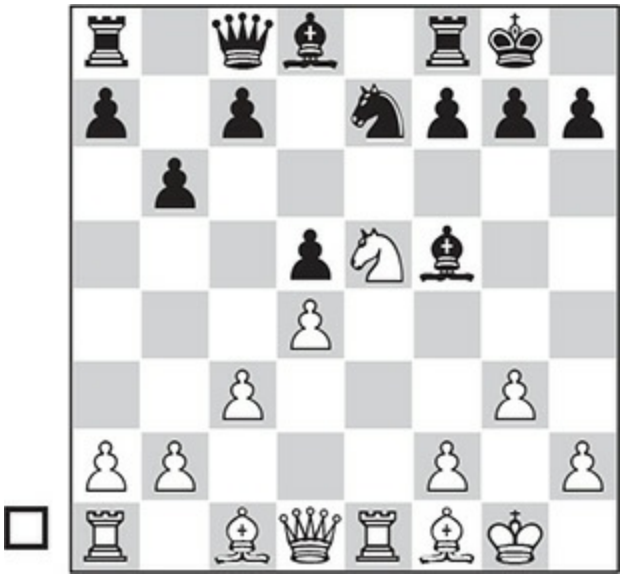
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.0-0 ♘xe4 5.♖e1 ♘d6 6.♘xe5 ♗e7 7.♗f1 ♘f5 8.♘f3 0-0 9.d4 d5 10.♘c3 ♘h4 11.♘xh4 ♗xh4 12.♘e2 ♗f5 13.c3 ♕d7 14.g3 ♗d8 15.♘f4

15.♗g2 ♘e7 16.♘f4 c6 17.♘d3 ♖e8 18.♘e5 ♕c8.

15...♘e7 16.♘d3± b6 17.♘e5

Exploiting the drawback of 16...b6. In chess, one important way to think is to exploit the drawback of the opponent's previous move. When Black played 16...b6, the a6- and c6-squares became weak. With 17.♘e5, White is gaining some control of the c6-square.

17...♕c8



TASK 1: *Find a good continuation for White. Time to think: 3 minutes.*

18.b3!

The drawback of 17...♕c8 is that the ♘e7 lost one of its protectors temporarily. 18.b3 takes advantage of this. We have seen coaches and authors teach and write a lot about the concept of prophylaxis, which basically emphasises paying attention to the opponent's next move. But apart from every move having ideas, it also has some drawbacks. This factor unfortunately has not been paid the attention it deserves. When we are playing for the initiative and we can pose continuous threats, exploiting the drawback of opponent's previous move is a very important tool.

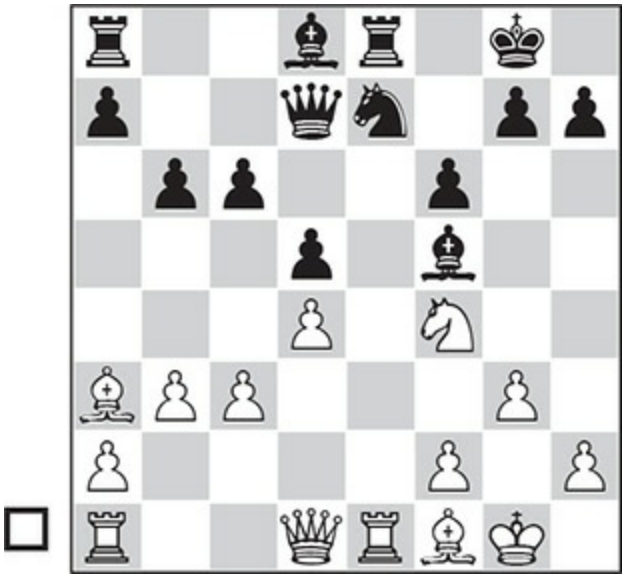
18.♕a4 c6± 19.♗a6 ♕c7 20.♗f4 b5 21.♕a3 g5! 22.♗xg5 (22.♘g6 gxf4 23.♘xe7+ ♗xe7 24.♖xe7 ♕b6) 22...f6∞.

18...f6 19.♘d3

Even though White has lost time by going 17.♘e5 and coming back with 19.♘d3, he has driven Black's queen to a passive position, and weakened the e6-square in the process.

19.♘f3 ♕d7 20.♗a3± was also interesting.

19...♕d7 20.♗a3 ♖e8 21.♘f4 c6



TASK 2: *Find the most interesting options available to White and analyse them to your best ability. Time to think: 10 minutes.*

22.♕e2?

This is probably based on either a miscalculation, an incorrect assessment of the resulting position or an underestimation of Black's defensive resources.

A) The prophylactic move 22.♕f3! is mainly aimed against Black's idea of playing ...♗c7 on the next move. Black's pieces lack coordination. With 21...c6, Black hopes to play 22...♗c7 and connect the rooks and equalise. Once Black has played ...♗c7, he will move the ♘e7 and start trading the rooks on the e-file. We can see that there is not much White can do to halt this once Black takes the first step with ...♗c7.

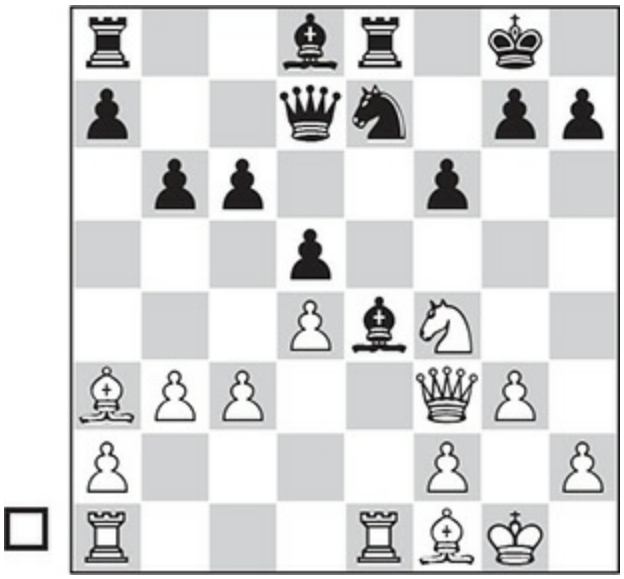
Such moments are critical moments. If White can do something about the opponent's impending plan, he will fight for an advantage. If not, the position fizzles out to equality. In such situations, we should put in extra effort to find that special resource that will meet our aim of fighting for an advantage or at least keeping the pressure on for longer.

Refute 22...♗c7. Time: 2 minutes.

A1) 22...♗c7? does not work, due to 23.♖xe7 ♖xe7 24.♗xe7 ♕xe7 25.♘xd5!+-. Now we can see why 22.♕f3 is helpful for White!

If Black cannot play his intended 22...♗c7, he has to come up with a different way to untangle his pieces. Such sudden changes in the course of a game can also unsettle some players;

A2) 22...♗e4?!



analysis diagram

TASK 3: *Find a good continuation for White. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

23.♖xe4! is an instructive exchange sacrifice, underscoring the numerous light-square weaknesses present in Black's position and the lack of coordination of his pieces (23.♕e2 transposes after 23...♗f5! (23...♗c7? 24.♗h3 ♗f5 25.♕e6+! ♕xe6 26.♘xe6 ♗b8 27.♘xg7!±) 24.♕f3 ♗e4 25.♖xe4!): 23...dxe4 24.♕xe4 (24.♗c4+?! ♘d5 25.♕h5 b5! 26.♗xd5+ cxd5 27.♕xd5+ ♕xd5 28.♘xd5 ♗b6∓) 24...♘d5 25.♗h3! (the key move behind the exchange sacrifice. We should have seen this as well while considering the exchange sacrifice) 25...♖xe4 26.♗xd7 ♘xf4 27.gxf4 (27.♗xc6 ♘e2+ 28.♔g2 ♘xc3 29.♗xa8 ♖xd4 30.♗b2 ♖d3±). Despite being an exchange down, White is exerting enormous pressure on Black's position: 27...♗e7 (27...♖xf4 28.♗d6 ♖h4 29.♗xc6 ♖c8 30.♗d5+ ♔h8 31.♖e1+-) 28.♗xc6 ♗xa3 and now:

A21) 29.♗xe4 ♖e8 30.♖e1 ♔f8 31.♔f1 ♗b2 32.♖e3 ♗xc3 33.♖xc3

♖xe4 34.♖c8+ ♔f7 35.♖c7+ ♔g6 (35...♔f8 36.♖xa7 ♖xd4 37.♖b7+-) 36.d5 ♖d4 37.f5+ ♔xf5 38.♖xg7 h5 39.♖xa7 ♖xd5 40.♖a4 b5 41.♖b4 and White retains chances to win, even though it is not going to be easily achieved, if at all;

A22) 29.♗d5+! is an important intermediate move to disrupt the black king's position. Wherever it chooses to go, there will be some drawback that will favour White:

A221) 29...♔h8 30.♗xe4 ♖e8 31.♗c6 (the black king has been pushed to the corner) 31...♖e2 32.♗b5 ♖c2 33.♖e1 g6 34.♖e8+ ♔g7 35.♖b8 (35.♖a8 a5) 35...♔h6 36.♖b7 ♖xc3 37.♖xa7 ♗d6 38.♖b7 ♗xf4 39.♖xb6+-;

A222) 29...♔f8 30.♗xe4 (now this comes with an attack on the h7-pawn, which is the main reason behind the intermediate move 29.♗d5+) 30...♖e8 31.♗xh7 ♗b2 32.♖d1 ♗xc3 33.♖d3 and White retains good winning chances.

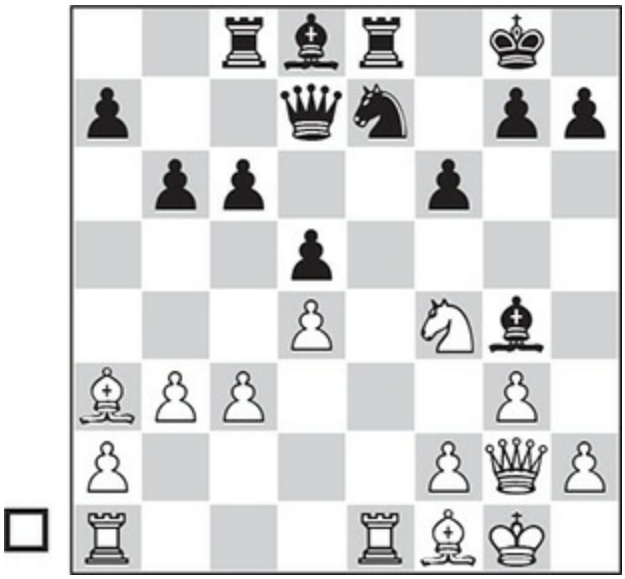
A3) If he tries to unpin the knight with 22...♘g6?, this runs into 23.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 24.♘xd5! ♗e4. It looks like Black has his own trick, but 25.♗c4! completely destroys him: 25...♔h8 (25...♗xf3 26.♘xf6+ ♔h8 27.♘xe8+-) 26.♖e1! cxd5 27.♗xd5 and White wins easily now;

A4) 22...♗g4 is the critical move: 23.♕g2. This looks like a strange place for the queen, but the whole concept behind this will become clearer when we try to find a good reply for Black. Most of the time, the real beauty of a concept or a deep idea lies not just in the strength or the achievements of the move itself, but in denying the opponent the activity he so desires and making him suffocate without any viable alternatives. If we delve a little deeper into the position, we can see that Black is not able to come up with a decent move that improves his position without compromising on some factor or other.

Refute 23...♗c7. Thinking time: 1 minute.

A41) 23...♗c7? 24.♗xe7 ♖xe7 (24...♗xf4 25.gxf4+-) 25.♖xe7 ♕xe7 26.♘xd5!+-;

A42) 23...♖c8



analysis diagram

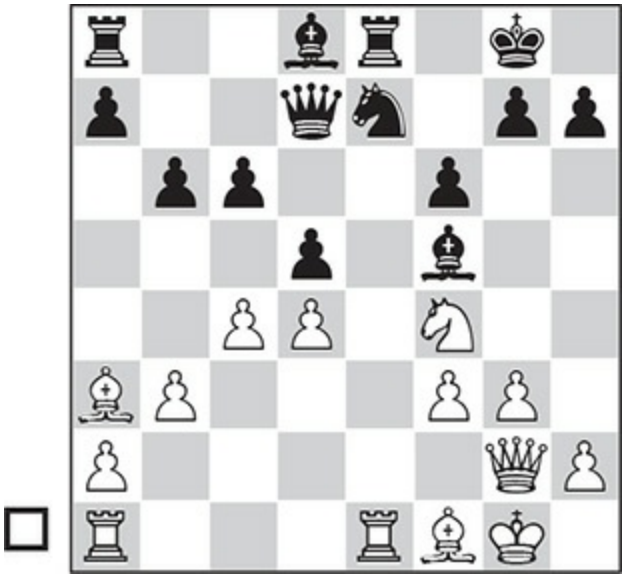
TASK 4: *Thinking time: 5 minutes.*

A421) 24.c4!? (since Black's pieces are passively placed and lacking coordination, it is good if White can open up the position to take advantage of his active pieces) 24...♗c7 25.♖xe7 (25.♗xe7!? ♖xe7 26.cxd5 ♖xe1 27.♖xe1 ♗xf4 28.dxc6 ♕xc6 29.gxf4 and despite White's pawn structure being what it is, he retains a clear advantage and Black has a long struggle ahead) 25...♖xe7 26.♗xe7 ♕xe7 27.cxd5 ♗xf4 28.gxf4 ♗d7 29.♗a6! (29.dxc6 ♗xc6 30.d5 ♗d7 31.a4±) 29...♖c7 30.♗c4 ♔f8 31.dxc6 ♗xc6 32.d5 ♗e8 33.♖d1 ♕d6 34.♕f3 ♖e7 (34...b5 35.♗f1±) 35.a4±;

A422) 24.♗a6! destroys the coordination of Black's pieces further: 24...♖b8 (24...♖c7 25.f3 ♗f5 26.g4! – suddenly, the action shifts to the other side of the board – 26...♗g6 27.♘e6+- or 26...♘g6 27.gxf5 ♘xf4 28.♕g4 g5 29.fxg6+-) 25.c4!+–. White's pieces are well placed to take maximum advantage of such an opening up of the position. The evaluation is an analytical engine's, not mine!

A43) 23...♖b8 24.c4±;

A44) 23...♗f5!? 24.c4 ♗e4 25.f3 ♗f5



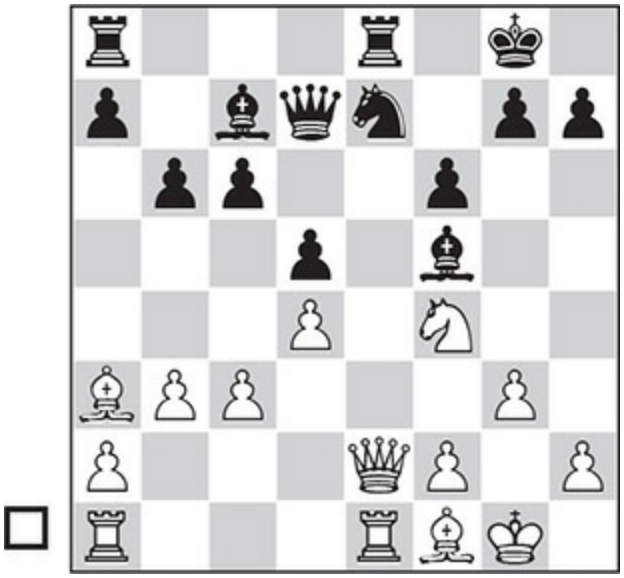
analysis diagram

TASK 5: *Find a strong continuation for White. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

26.♕d2! is another prophylaxis to discourage ...♗c7 by Black (26.♕e2? ♗c7= 27.♗xe7 ♗xf4 28.gxf4 ♕f7), e.g. 26...♗c7?! (26...g5!±; 26...♘g6? 27.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 28.cxd5) 27.♖xe7 ♖xe7 28.♗xe7 ♕xe7 29.cxd5±.

B) 22.♗d3!? is another very strong continuation for White apart from the main move 22.♕f3. The exchange 22...♗xd3 is necessary to untangle Black's pieces: 23.♕xd3 ♗c7 24.♗xe7 (24.♘e6?! ♘g6 25.♘xc7 ♕xc7=) 24...♖xe7 (24...♗xf4? 25.♗xf6 gxf6 26.gxf4±) 25.♖xe7 ♕xe7 26.♘g2± (the evaluation of this position is tricky without computer help. White has interesting possibilities that involve h2-h4-h5, ♘g2-e3-f5, b2-b4/a2-a4/b4-b5, and ♘g2-e3-c4. In all these cases, White increases the pressure on Black, which is not easy to oppose over the board) 26...♕f7 27.♖e1 ♖e8?! 28.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 29.♕a6! ♗b8 (29...♕b8 30.c4+-) 30.♕b7+-.

22...♗c7!↰



TASK 6: *Is 23.♕xe7 objectively good or not? Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

23.♕xe7?

White is consistently following up on his plan started on the previous move. From the following analysis, we can see that White is worse off in most of the variations. So either this is a calculation mistake, or White did not evaluate the arising positions very well. As can be seen from this example, playing out of inertia, or, to put it in a more acceptable language, being consistent with our plan, is not always a virtue. We should always go by the changes occurring in the position with each of the opponent's moves, and understand their influence well before deciding on whether to be consistent or make changes in our plans.

White should have reduced his ambition and settled for a safer continuation like 23.♘g2 (23.♗xe7 ♗d6) 23...a5 24.♘e3 ♗g6 25.c4 ♘f5 26.♗h3 ♕f7∞.

23...♖xe7 24.♖xe7 ♕c8!

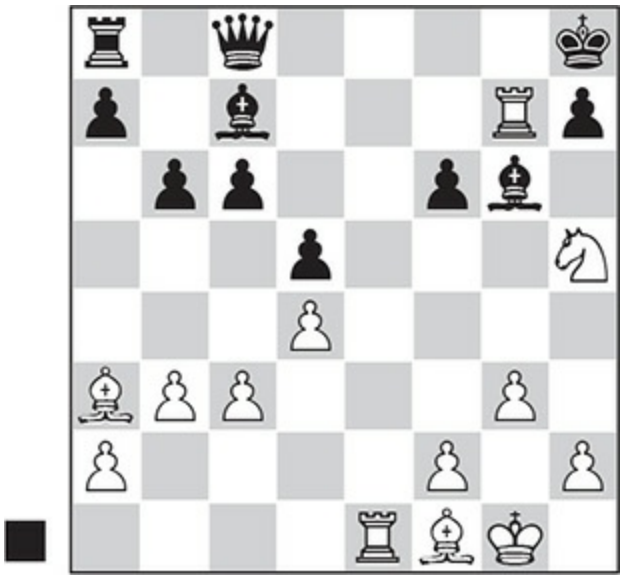
It is White who should be careful after this resource by Black. Probably White expected 24...♕d8?! when he played 23.♕e7?: 25.♘e6!? ♕xe7 (25...♗xe6? 26.♖xe6±) 26.♗xe7 ♗xe6=.

25.♘h5 ♗g6!

Black is firmly in the driver's seat.

26.♖xg7+ ♔h8 27.♖e1

27.♗e7? ♗d8-+.



TASK 7: *Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

27...c5?

This could have thrown away all his advantage had White responded appropriately.

A) Not 27...♗d8?? 28.♗d3+-;

B) 27...♗xh5! 28.♖ee7 and now:

B1) With 28...♕f5!? 29.♖xc7 ♖e8 Black manages to activate his pieces and at the same time goes after the white king: 30.♖xa7 ♖e1 31.g4! (only with this ingenious resource does White barely manage to retain the balance; 31.♖ge7 ♖xf1+ 32.♔xf1 ♕d3+ 33.♔g1 ♕d1+ 34.♔g2 ♕f3+ 35.♔g1 (35.♔h3 ♕f5+ 36.♔g2 ♗f3+) 35...♕d1+=) 31...♗xg4 32.♖gf7. Black's king is vulnerable and hence he should take the draw: 32...♖xf1+ 33.♔xf1 ♕b1+ 34.♔g2 ♕e4+ 35.♔g1 ♕e1+ 36.♔g2=;

B2) 28...♗g6! 29.♖xc7 ♕g4 (threatening 30...♖e8) 30.♖ge7 ♗e4 31.♖xc6 ♕f3 32.♖xe4 dxe4. 33.♖e6 ♕xc3 34.♗e7 (34.♖xe4 ♕c2 35.♖e3 ♖c8 36.♗e7 ♔g7 37.♖f3 f5∓) 34...♔g7∓. There is still a lot of struggle left, but Black will be in the driver's seat.

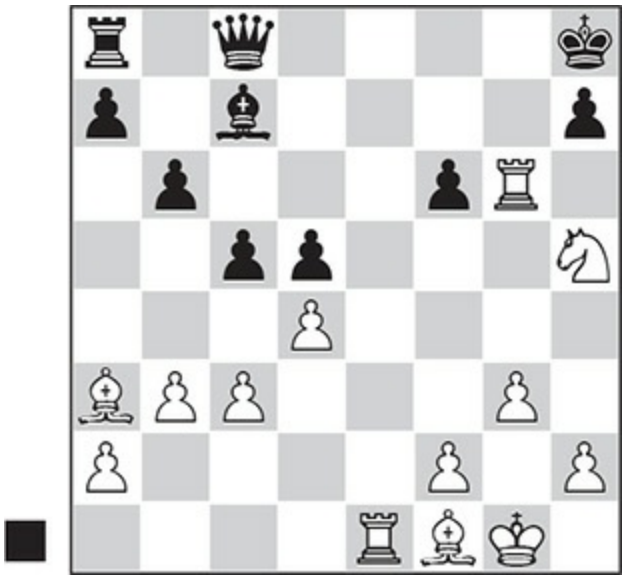
28.♖ee7?

A) 28.♗b5 ♗xh5 29.♖ee7 ♕f5 30.♖xc7 ♕b1+ 31.♗f1 ♗g6-+;

B) 28.dxc5 ♗e5 29.♖xe5 fxe5 30.cxb6 axb6 31.♗e7 ♖a7-+;

C) 28.c4! opens the a1-h8 diagonal for his bishop against the ♔h8: 28...♗xh5 (28...♗d6 29.♖xg6 hxg6 30.♘xf6 ♕a6 31.♗c1 ♕xa2 32.♖e6 ♗f8 33.♗g5∞) 29.♖ee7 ♗g6 (29...♕f5 30.♖xc7 ♖e8 31.dxc5 ♖e1 32.♖xh7+ ♕xh7 33.♖xh7+ ♔xh7 34.cxb6 axb6 35.♔g2 d4 36.♗d3+ ♔g7 37.c5 bxc5 38.♗xc5 ♖d1 39.♗e4∞ d3? 40.♗f3!) 30.♖xc7 ♕g4 31.dxc5 ♕f3! (threatening 32...♗e4) 32.♖xg6 hxg6 33.cxd5 ♕xd5 34.c6 (34.♗b2 ♖f8) 34...♖e8 35.h4 ♖e1 36.♖c8+ ♔h7 37.♖c7+= ♔h6 38.♗f8+ ♔h5 39.♖h7+ ♔g4 40.c7 ♔f3! (threatening 41...♖f1) 41.♖e7! (41.♗b4?? ♖xf1+ 42.♔xf1 ♕d1+ 43.♗e1 ♕e2+-+) 41...♕d2 42.♖e3+! ♖xe3 43.♗g2+! ♔e2 44.♗f1+ ♔f3 (44...♔e1!? 45.♗b4! ♕xb4 46.c8♕=) 45.♗g2+ with an amazing draw;

D) 28.♖xg6!



analysis diagram

TASK 8: *Analyse the consequences of 28.♖xg6!. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

28...hxg6 29.♘xf6 ♕f5 30.♘e8! (the critical move that we should have seen while analysing 28.♖g6) 30...♕f7! (30...♕d7 31.♘xc7=) 31.♘xc7 ♖f8! (this nice intermediate move is a crucial element for Black to fight for an

advantage; 31...♕xc7 32.c4!=; once the a1-h8 diagonal is opened, the black king will feel the heat, giving sufficient counterplay for White) 32.♖e2 (blocking the f1-a6 diagonal, which was the point of the intermediate ...♖f8 by Black) 32...♕xc7 33.c4 dxc4 34.dxc5! (34.bxc4 ♔g8 35.dxc5 ♖d8! 36.cxb6 ♕xb6!-+) 34...♖d8 35.cxb6 ♕xb6 36.♗b2+ ♔g8! 37.♖e1 ♖d3! (37...cxb3 38.♗c4+!=) and Black is still trying for an advantage.

For players who are working hard and trying to improve their chess strength, learning to fight for more in positions that are close to a draw by taking risks is very important. Most players settle for a draw in positions where they can fight for more only by taking some amount of risk. This could easily be a lost opportunity. The quality of fighting for more is more valuable than the 'worst-case scenario' of losing a few Elo points in a practical game. When we fight for more in almost equal positions, it also improves our confidence. We are banking on ourselves, rather than on the opponent's skills.

38.♗xd3 cxd3 39.♗c1 ♕c5 (39...♕a5 40.♖d1) 40.♗e3 ♕c2 41.♖c1 (41.a4 ♕xb3) 41...♕xa2 42.b4 ♕b2 43.♖c8+ ♔f7 44.♖c7+ ♔e6 45.♖xa7 d2 46.♗xd2 ♕xd2 47.h4 with a fortress.

28...♗d6

Now Black is completely winning, and he hauled in the point after a few more moves.

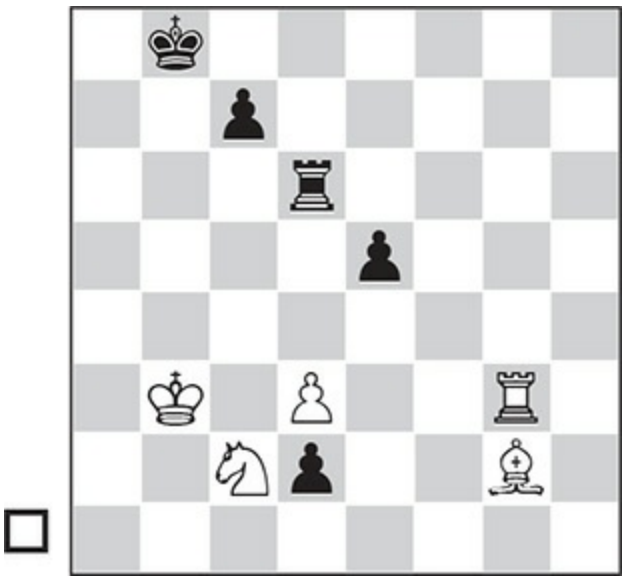
29.♖b7 ♕f5 30.♗e2 ♖e8 31.♗g4 ♕xg4 32.♖xh7+ ♗xh7 33.♖xh7+ ♔xh7 34.♘xf6+ ♔g6 35.♘xg4 ♖e2 36.♔g2 ♖xa2 37.♗c1 ♖c2

And White resigned.

Game 95 Level 4

Leonid Kubbel

Study, 1918



White to play and win. Time to think: 15 to 30 minutes.

Let us try to understand the position well before getting into the specifics. White has two extra pieces, but the black pawn on d2 is the real key to the position. To win the game, White should either do something about the d2-pawn, weave a mating net against Black's king, or gain a huge material advantage.

1.♖g8+

A) A direct attempt to stop the pawn does not work, as can be seen after 1.♘e3? ♖xd3+ 2.♔c2. It looks like White has everything under control, because the trick 2...♖e3 does not work anymore. But with the intermediate move 2...d1♕+! 3.♘xd1 ♖xg3, Black escapes easily;

B) 1.♔a4?, trying to weave a mating net around Black's king, does not work either: 1...d1♕ 2.♖g8+ ♔a7 3.♖a8+ ♔b6 4.♖b8+ ♔a7 5.♖a8+ (5.♖b7+?? ♔a6-+) and White gets nothing more than a draw.

1...♔a7 2.♘e3!

There is a big difference between playing ♘e3 one move earlier and now, and we shall see what it is.

A) Even at this point, trying to create a mating net around Black's king does not work: 2.♔c4? d1♕ 3.♖a8+ ♔b6 4.♖b8+ ♔a5! (4...♔a7?? is very convenient for White: 5.♖b7+ ♔a6 (5...♔a8 loses to 6.♖b1+) 6.♘b4+

♔a5 7.♖a7+ ♔b6 8.♖a6#; in this line, we can see the usefulness of having an advanced king) 5.♖b5+ ♔a4! (this is the most accurate retreat; if Black's king goes to the corner with 5...♔a6??, the white bishop will be able to contribute to the attack, i.e. 6.♘b4+ ♔a7 7.♖a5+ ♔b8 8.♖a8#, so it makes sense for the king to get away from the influence of the white bishop) 6.♖b4+ ♔a5 7.♖b5+ and White has nothing better than to take a draw;

B) 2.♖a8+? loses control of the critical g3-square, which can be used by the black rook to escape, in comparison to the main line: 2...♔b6 3.♖b8+ and now:

B1) 3...♔a7?? 4.♖b7+ ♔a6 (4...♔a8 loses in multiple ways: 5.♔c4 d1♕ 6.♖b1++- or 5.♖b6+ c6 6.♖xc6 d1♕ 7.♖xd6+ ♔b8 8.♗e4+-) 5.♘b4+ ♔a5 6.♔c4 (6.♔c2, stopping the d2-pawn, also wins easily) 6...♖d4+ 7.♔c5 ♔a4 8.♘c2 ♖d6 9.♖b4+ ♔a5 10.♖b3 and Black will soon be checkmated;

B2) 3...♔a6?? 4.♘b4+ ♔a5 5.♔c4, and Black will be checkmated shortly;

B3) 3...♔a5 4.♗f3 ♖xd3+ 5.♔c4 ♖xf3 allows Black to save the game;

B4) 3... ♔c5 4.♘e3 ♖xd3+ 5.♔c2 ♖xe3 6.♔xd2= leads nowhere.

2...♖xd3+ 3.♔c2!

3.♔c4? ♖xe3=.

3...♖xe3

3...e4 4.♘d1+-.

Most players will reject this line at this point, concluding that Black has equalised by winning back one minor piece. There is nothing wrong with this kind of thinking. We have to analyse all the important options before us in the initial position. After analysing all the options, if we come to the conclusion that none of them leads us to our aim, we have the following options:

1. Possibly the aim we had for the initial position was wrong (example: we wanted to win, but the position is not winning). In this case, we have to reduce our aim and analyse accordingly to achieve the new aim.

2. Possibly we made some mistake in our analysis, and we are not able to achieve our aim as a result. After doing the first round of analysis, we should

understand that the conclusions we reach are not final. We should realise that it is only the preliminary analysis.

3. Checking our analysis objectively for mistakes is a very important part of analysing a position. Care should be taken to spot hidden resources for ourselves and our opponent, which can have a big impact on the outcome of our analysis and, subsequently, on the game.

4. Once we realise that the first round of analysis did not deliver what we wanted, we should do a second round of analysis, but this time we should slow down deliberately and consider carefully each move for White and for Black in our variation.

5. We should try different moves for ourselves in the analysis that we did not consider in the first round of analysis, and should try to make them work, basically redoing the candidate moves list with a fresh set of eyes.

6. We should try to consider special kinds of moves (sacrifices, pieces suddenly moving back, long-range moves with the pieces, intermediate moves, a sudden quiet prophylactic move, etc.) in the analysis. Most players miss these kinds of moves while making a list of candidate moves.

7. It is possible that our ideas and moves were correct, but we did not pay sufficient attention to the move order in which it was being implemented. Try to implement your idea with a different sequence of moves and see if it works. This will solve the problem in many cases. There is not one correct solution available that can be applied every time we are not able to find the correct solution in our analysis. We should understand that there are many approaches possible, and should become good at applying them in our analysis. All this should be learnt during our home training. That is why, in my view, the quality of the training we do at home, either on our own, with coaches, or with training partners, should be done with utmost seriousness.

If we analyse one move further:

4.♔xd2

... we suddenly realise that the black rook finds itself in a difficult spot. Bautiful domination on an open board!

Changing the move order with 4.♖a8+?. changes the outcome completely: 4...♔b6 5.♔xd2 ♖g3 and the black rook escapes.

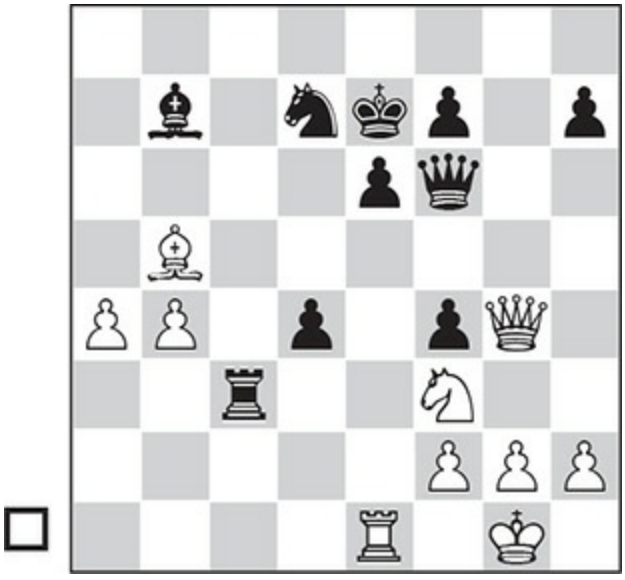
4...♖b3 5.♖a8+ ♔b6 6.♖b8+ ♔c5 7.♖xb3 1-0

In the initial position, when our opponent's passed pawn was on d2, we might be tempted to go for checkmate by allowing the pawn to queen. This is a fancier and perhaps seemingly more aesthetic option. But by carefully analysing the possibilities, we find that with correct play by our opponent, we cannot enforce a checkmate. This leads us to continue analysing in a position that we might have earlier concluded as promising only equality. Then it dawns on us that the opponent's rook is dominated and gives us a winning material advantage.

5. Sometimes we incorrectly evaluate the resulting position at the end of the analysis

This is not necessarily a calculation mistake, but rather a mistake in evaluation or a lack of understanding.

Game 96 Level 2
Vladimir Kramnik
Viswanathan Anand
Bonn 2008 (5)



Time to think: 8 minutes.

The moves for both White and Black were more or less forced until this point. There will generally be different ‘starting points’ in our analysis. Sometimes, they come in the initial position, and at other times they come at different points in our analysis. By the starting point, what I mean is that from that moment on, if our analysis is correct, we will get the truth about the position in our analysis as the preceding moves leading to the starting position do not have an impact in our analysis. They have either been checked thoroughly for mistakes or cannot be changed, as they have been played already in the game.

The question is: can White play 29.♘xd4 or not?

29.♘xd4 ♕xd4

Some of us, most Level 1 players, for instance, will reject 29.♘xd4, thinking it is a blunder, and miss:

30.♖d1

This is the main idea behind 29.♘xd4. Some of us who went ahead with 29.♘xd4 ♕xd4 30. ♖d1 will stop at this point and will be convinced that the idea works in our favour, as we see that once the black queen moves, White can take the knight on d7 with check. Those who see this idea are likely to stop at this point in their analysis.

Let us identify the problems with regard to calculation faced by players around this level using this position and the analysis made:

1. They do not see the main tactical idea in the position (unless given a prompt, and sometimes not even after that!). Many of us simply reject moves like 29.♘xd4 from our thought process, because it looks like a blunder.

2. After seeing an attractive idea, they stop the analysis at the first opportunity and draw hasty and mostly incorrect conclusions. They stop the analysis too early without taking it to its logical conclusion, because of hastiness and carelessness.

3. They don’t check the analysis for possible mistakes, believing their preliminary analysis and resultant conclusion, because of naivety in analysis.

4. They miss the opponent’s resources (best defence) to our moves or ideas, because of a lack of attention and alertness.

5. They are not curious enough to see whether our idea is good or not,

which is a psychological failure.

6. They are not able to visualise the position in their minds beyond this point.

30...♘f6!

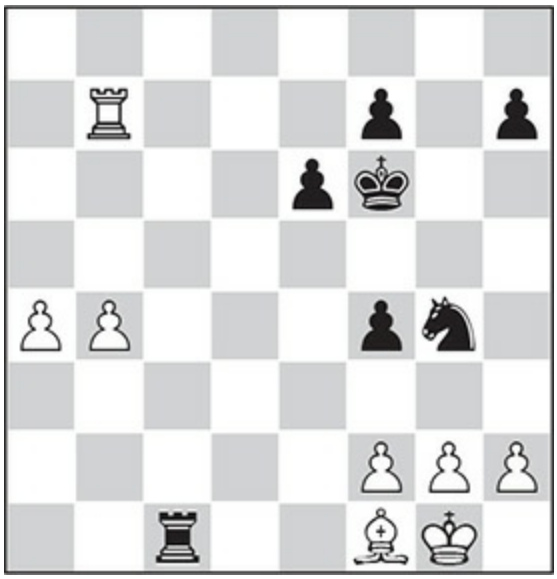
It is quite possible that most players miss this clever, but not so tough to find, resource for the opponent at this level. We should tell ourselves to watch out specifically for such not so obvious resources for our opponent. Such autocorrection instructions are very essential to help us learn from our mistakes and avoid making them in the future. Merely accepting our mistakes will not make us accountable for making them.

30...♗f3. Such tactical resources are very tough to spot for Level 1 players. In this particular instance, it doesn't work, but sometimes such crazy-looking moves could prove to be the only solution to the problem at hand. We should learn to consider all kinds of crazy moves in our analysis and develop the capability to analyse them to come to correct conclusions: 31.♕h4+ (31.♖xd4?? ♖c1+! 32.♗f1 ♗xg4) 31...♘f6 32.♖xd4 ♖c1+ 33.♗f1 and White remains with an extra queen.

31.♖xd4 ♘xg4

Some of us might conclude here that Black is winning with the extra piece, and miss the following possibility for White:

32.♖d7+ ♔f6 33.♖xb7 ♖c1+ 34.♗f1



Most likely, Kramnik stopped at this point and concluded that White's connected pawns on the queenside would be more than enough compensation for the pin along the first rank. It is not obvious how the knight on g4 can find a way to attack the bishop in the near future.

34...♘e3!

Many of us will not be looking for more than one tactical shot in a puzzle. We could be thinking that we must find only one tough move. Once that is done, we relax our alertness for further tactical possibilities, either favouring us or our opponent. We have to teach ourselves to be constantly on the alert for tactical possibilities throughout the game (or during analysis while training).

35.fxe3 fxe3

QUESTION: *After 35...fxe3, is there any way White can try to put up some form of defence to prolong the fight or not? Time to think: 2 minutes.*

With 36.♖c7! ♖xc7 37.g3, White could have given back his extra material and created some chances for survival. Without the e3-pawn, White will have decent practical chances to save the game. It is important that we are always looking for hard-to-find resources in apparently losing positions also. Who knows, sometimes we may find just that!

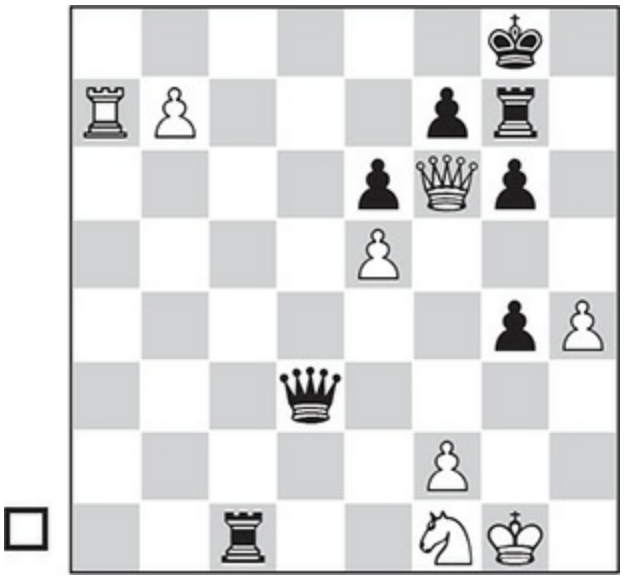
TIP: Finding clever unexpected resources when in trouble is a quality to be acquired and cherished in our journey towards excellence.

Most likely, Kramnik went for the line starting with 29.♘xd4 because he evaluated the resulting position after move 34.♗f1 in his favour, and missed 34...♘e3 completely. Here, the assessment went wrong due to missing the opponent's subsequent trick.

Reasons:

Carelessness, haste, letting emotions get the better of us, not being objective, the position is too complex to evaluate correctly, lack of adequate chess strength/understanding, missing an essential resource in the position resulting in incorrect evaluation, etc.

Game 97 Level 3
Chernikov
Ertuk
Sarajevo 1968



TASK 1: *Time to think: 10 minutes.*

At first sight, it looks like White is hopelessly lost, with Black's queen and rook combining to create what looks like a mating attack against the white king.
1.b8♕+? ♔h7, and the black king finds a safe haven on h7. White can try to give up material in the hope of getting a perpetual check, but it does not work, as can be seen in the following variation: 2.♕xg7+ ♔xg7 3.♖xf7+ ♔xf7 4.♕b7+ ♔g8 5.♕a8+ ♔h7 6.♕b7+ ♔h6 and White runs out of checks.
1.♕d8+! ♕xd8 2.♖a8 ♖d1
At this point, it looks like Black can give up his queen for the b-pawn and his extra exchange will ensure he is better, but...
3.♖c8!
A fantastic move, ensuring that the b-pawn is out of danger when it promotes. The resulting complications also work in White's favour.
3...♔h7 4.b8♕ ♖xf1+!

From this point onwards, White should calculate accurately to walk out of the checks with pointed moves.

5.♔xf1 ♕d3+!

Many players will see either 5...♕d1+ or 5...♕d3+ only, but not both, or will not appreciate that they could lead to different positions in the analysis. 5...♕d1+? 6.♔g2 ♕f3+ (6...♕d5+ 7.♔h2 g3+ 8.♔xg3 ♕d3+ 9.f3 g5 10.h5+-) 7.♔g1 ♕d1+ 8.♔h2 g3+ 9.♔g2! (9.♔h3? g5!-+) 9...♕d5+ 10.♔xg3 (at this point, we can appreciate the white queen's position, which defends the e5-pawn and at the same time creates dangerous threats against Black's king) 10...♕d3+ 11.f3, and the checks come to a stop.

6.♔g1!

6.♔g2? g5! (6...♕e4+ 7.♔h2 g3+ 8.♔xg3 g5!, which is the same idea with a different move order, also works) 7.h5 ♕e4+ 8.♔h2 g3+ 9.♔xg3 (9.fxg3 ♕e2+=) 9...♕f4+=. This check is possible due to the earlier 6...g5!.

6...g5!

It's very important for us to find this move. I am afraid many of us would have missed it completely, or underestimated its importance in the whole analysis.

7.h5!

It is time for Black to worry about his own king, and there is no clear solution in sight.

7...♔h6

7...♕d1+ 8.♔h2 g3+ 9.♔g2! ♕d5+ 10.♔xg3 ♕d3+ 11.f3, and White wins.

8.♖h8+ ♖h7 9.♕f8+ ♔xh5 10.♕xf7+ ♔h6 11.♕xe6+ ♕g6 12.♖xh7+ ♔xh7 13.♕xg4±

Finally, after the dust is settled with a series of forcing moves for both sides, White emerges with an extra pawn. The engines agree that the position deserves nothing more than the typical 0.00! Despite White 'not getting any advantage', he managed to emerge with an extra pawn from the initial position that looked quiet hopeless for him. This is a good example to show the importance of possessing the ability to calculate well. Good calculation skills can help a player come out of difficult positions, increase our advantage, put the opponent under tremendous pressure and out-calculate our opponents in complex situations – in short, to bring the best out of us and the position in front of us. When I tried to find this position in Mega Database, I was unable to do so. I do not remember how I got introduced to the position, but I have been using it for many years extensively with my students for calculation training, and it has had a positive impact on imparting very good values to the students. Hence, I am reproducing this position in this book.

6. Rushing too quickly into variations without

deliberate checking invites mistakes and oversights

Some players genuinely do not know how to slow down their thinking process. A lack of proper training in the analytical process can also be a possible reason. In our training at home and in classes, we should always try to analyse the variations ourselves first and only then refer to the book move. It takes months and years to grow stronger in the analytical process. Hence, it makes sense to start this process early in our chess career.

Some players are impulsive and cannot control themselves to slow down while thinking. As soon as they see an interesting move, they feel the urge to play it immediately. Such players also rely on their opponent not replying with good moves. They secretly hope that their opponent makes a mistake and justifies their decision to play quickly without deliberate thinking.

Some players play quickly to hide their insecurities and nervousness, and playing quickly provides them (in their mind) a mask to project a confident personality to their opponent. Another reason why some players play quickly is the expectation that their opponent will also play quickly in return. Some players play quickly to project an image to their opponent: ‘I perfectly understand what is going on. My brain can work just as quickly as yours can, and probably quicker and better’. Some players play quickly to cover up the fact that they lack sufficient confidence in their analytical abilities. Instead of slowing down and coming up with sub-standard moves, it makes sense to play the moves that our mind believes in confidently and quickly.

The analogy I give to my students is as follows. Imagine a scenario where we must cross a river at night with only moonlight aiding us. Also, imagine we have an iron rod in our hand. There are both big rocks and crocodiles in the water. Both are not moving and are completely still, of course! The best way for us to cross the river is to poke at the first solid-looking object with our iron rod. If it does not move, we step on top of it. If the solid object moves, we know it is a crocodile and try the next solid-looking object. We repeat the process until we reach the other side of the river.

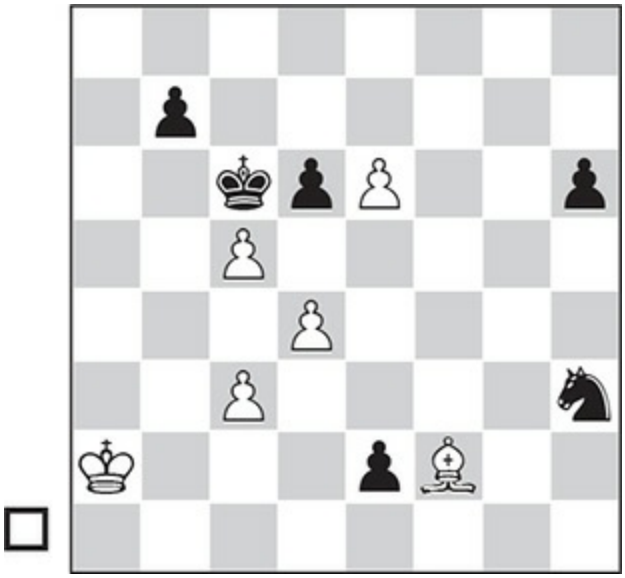
Here, the rocks are the correct moves in our analysis; the crocodiles are

the incorrect moves. The iron rod is the analysis we make to find if our move is correct or not. The other side of the river is the decision we make at the end of the analytical process. While crossing the river, if the object moves, we eliminate it and poke the following solid-looking thing. Similarly, in our analytical approach, we analyse a move, and if it does not work, we eliminate it. Then, we move to the next correct-looking move to analyse, and so on.

Just because the first object we poked turned out to be a rock does not mean our next object will always turn out to be a rock. Similarly, suppose the first move we consider in our analysis turns out to be correct. In that case, the rest of the moves in our analysis do not have to be accurate. We should learn to eliminate the moves that do not work and move to the next move in our list of possibilities.

Solution:
Do not rush to the next move before reasonably making sure the current move is the best option.

Game 98 Level 3
Leonid Kubbel
Study, source and date unknown



White to play and win

1.d5+!

1.♗g3? d5 2.c4 ♘f4= unfortunately does not work for White.

1...♔xd5

1...♔c7 2.♗g3 ♘f4 3.c4! (3.cxd6+? ♔xd6 4.♗xf4+ ♔xd5=) 3...h5 4.cxd6++-. A 1900 USCF student found this along with the main line in 15 minutes.

2.e7 ♘xf2 3.e8♕

It is possible that many players stop at this point in their analysis and conclude that White is winning. Stopping the analysis too early as a result of missing our opponent's main defensive ideas if they are not that obvious or forcing, is a very common problem with upcoming players.

3...♘d3!

A) 3...♘d1 4.♔b3;

B) 3...♘e4 4.♕h5+ (4.♕g8+ ♔xc5 5.♕g1++-; 4.c4+? ♔d4 5.♕h8+ ♔xc5 6.♕a1 ♔xc4=) 4...♔c6 5.♕h1 d5 6.♔b2+-.

4.c6!

A very important move. A 2040 USCF student took a long time to find it. Taking away this escape square for the black king is essential.

A) 4.♕xe2? ♘c1+-+;

B) 4.c4+? ♔xc5 5.♕e3+ ♔b4= (5...♔xc4? 6.♕xe2+- was the suggestion by the 2040 USCF student);

C) 4.cxd6? ♔xd6 5.♕g6+ ♔c5 6.♕h5+ ♔c6=.

4...bxc6 5.♕h5+

5.c4+?? ♔d4-+.

5...♔c4 6.♕xe2 1-0

7. Missing or underestimating the opponent's defensive resources

Missing good moves for our opponent is a widespread problem. It is one of the main reasons why many players do not make sufficient progress in their calculation abilities, despite regularly solving puzzles. How successful a player is in finding good moves for his opponent while analysing determines whether he is making progress in his analytical skills. Finding good moves for the opponent is in no way an overestimation of our opponent's skill. Instead, it is being objective and doing our job correctly. We must believe that most positions have sufficient resources, either hidden or obvious. Only our ability to analyse accurately will decide if we successfully bring these resources out in the open or not.

It is widespread at the upcoming players' level that they usually stop their calculation with a threat. As a result, if there is a simple or a good defence to their threat, they will miss it altogether.

Reasons:

a) One of the main reasons is a subconscious fear that if we find good moves for our opponent, it might refute our idea, and we will have to start all over again. For players who do not regularly work on improving their game, their self-confidence will be very low. They will have doubts about their capabilities. In such a scenario, it is easy for a player to play a reasonably good-looking move and hope their opponent will make mistakes and he will benefit as a result.

b) A player's inherent laziness and lack of genuine interest to improve his skills before expecting significant results, leads to the making of a careless player. Such an attitude will not allow a player to be alert to finding their

opponent’s defensive resources.

c) They are relying on their opponent’s mistakes for better results, rather than depending on their own strength.

d) Carelessness and analysing too quickly can also lead to this kind of mistake in analysis.

Solution:

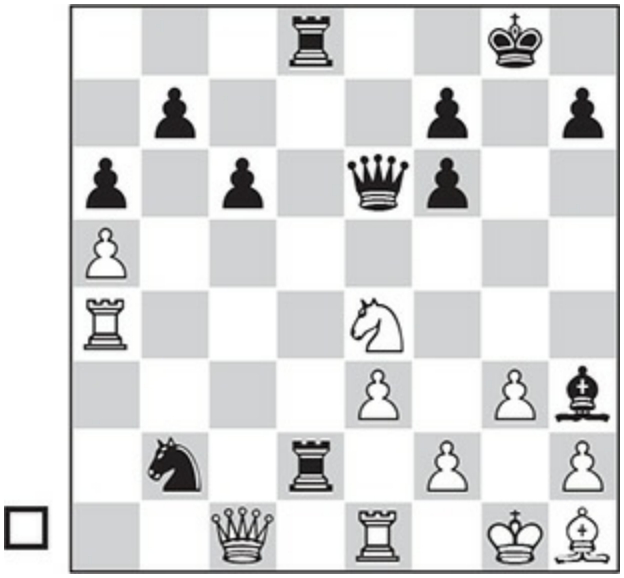
Working on improving prophylactic thinking, solving positions with rich resources for the opponent at different stages, while making a list of candidate moves for the opponent carefully and not casually.

Once we find a good defence for the opponent, a related problem is that we should try to give up immediately on that idea, instead of trying to overcome the defensive idea.

Game 99 Level 2

Ramesh RB	2345
Jha Sriram	2360

India tt 1998 (2)



TASK 1: *Find the best continuation for White. Time to think: 3 to 5 minutes.*

23.♖d4!?

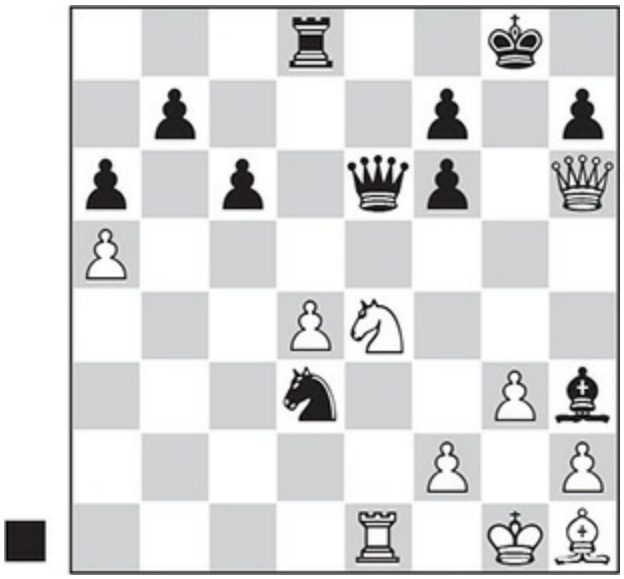
was played confidently in the game, missing the queen sacrifice that comes later on move 25.

23.♖a1! was completely missed during the game. Black loses material by force: 23...♕f5 24.f3 or 23...♘c4 24.♘xd2 ♖xd2 25.e4+-.

23...♖2xd4

23...♖8xd4 24.exd4 ♘d3 25.♕xd2 ♘xe1 26.♕h6!+- (26.♕xe1 f5).

24.exd4 ♘d3 25.♕h6



TASK 2: *Find the best continuation for Black. Time to think: 5 minutes.*

25...♕f5?

Not the best way to defend. We both thought White was completely winning. Nowadays, most players will go for 25...♘xe1! as their first option; back then, we were naive and trusted our opponent's ideas readily, or our calculation skills were simply not up to the mark! 26.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 27.♕xf6 ♖e8 28.f4 (28.♕g5+ ♔h8 29.♕d2 ♘d3 30.♗g2 ♖e1+ 31.♕xe1 ♘xe1 32.♗xh3 ♘f3+ 33.♔g2 ♘xd4 34.♗c8 ♘b3 35.♗xb7 ♘xa5 36.♗xa6±; 28.f3 ♘d3) 28...♘d3!=. The king no longer has the escape square f2 and White has to take a draw by perpetual check.

26.♖d1! ♘xf2?

A) 26...♖e8!? 27.♕e3! (27.♖xd3 ♖xe4 28.♗xe4 ♕xe4=) 27...♘xf2 28.♕xf2 ♖xe4 29.♕xf5 ♗xf5 30.♗xe4 ♗xe4 31.♖e1 f5 32.♖e2+-;

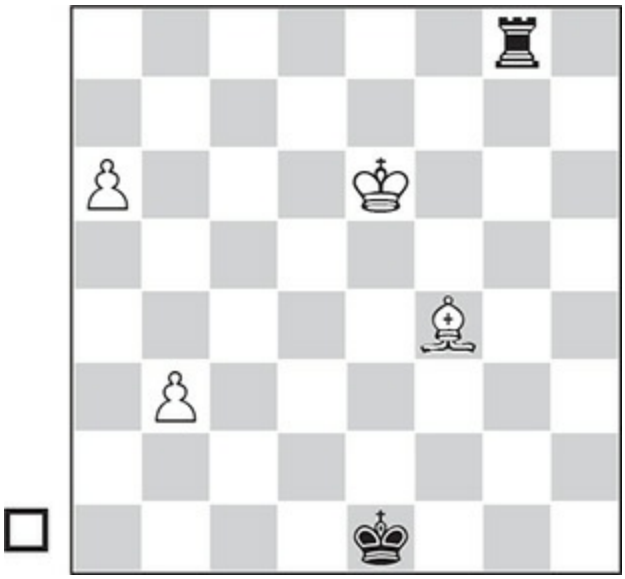
B) 26...♖xd4 27.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 28.♕xf6 ♘f4 29.♕d8++-.

27.♘xf2 ♗g4 28.♗e4 ♕h5 29.♘xg4 1-0

Game 100 Level 1

Ernest Pogosyants

Study, 1963



White to play and win

1.a7 ♖a8 2.♗b8 ♔d2 3.b4!

3.♔d7? ♔c3=.

3...♔c3 4.b5

It is possible that most players will have stopped analysing at around this point, assuming that the pawn cannot be stopped by the black king. It is very important to anticipate tricky defensive resources from the opponent until the end. It will keep us alert throughout, and we can lose the habit of relaxing too early.

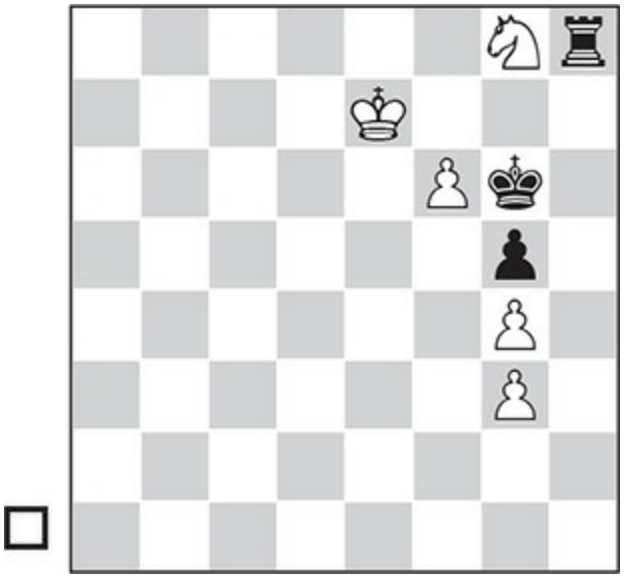
4...♔c4 5.b6 ♔c5 6.b7 ♖xa7 7.♗xa7+ ♔c6 8.b8♖! 1-0

8.b8♘+ ♔b7. The main point of the study comes on the very last move! I hope we have learnt the important lesson of keeping vigil until the end and not relaxing too early.

Game 101 Level 2

Yochanan Afek

Study, 1983



White to play and win

White's advantage lies in his advanced passed f-pawn and the inactive placement of Black's rook. The pawn structure on the kingside restrict Black's pieces quite a bit, and this in turn gives rise to a scenario in which White can even afford to sacrifice his knight to achieve a won pawn endgame or promote his passed pawn.

1.f7 ♖h7 2.♘h6! ♔xh6

2...♖xh6 3.f8♕+-.

3.♔e8 ♖h8+

3...♔g6!? 4.f8♘+! is another important defensive variation for Black that should be seen by the player while solving (4.f8♕? ♖h8!=).

4.f8♖!

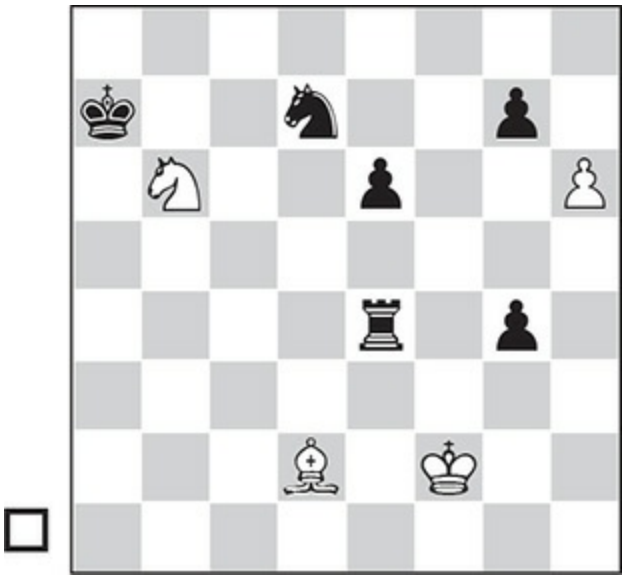
4.f8♕+?. I would not be surprised if many players concluded here that they had the correct solution! 4...♔g6 5.♕xh8, stalemate. Ideally, the player should find this stalemate defence for Black, avoid this pitfall and then find the correct solution.

4...♖h7 5.♖f6+ ♔g7 6.♖f7+

With a won pawn endgame. Even in a seemingly simple position, Afek

creatively demonstrates his signature underpromotion.

Game 102 Level 3
Tigran Gorgiev
Study, 1930



White to play and win

1.h7!
If 1.hxg7?, 1...♘f6 saves the day for Black.
1...g3+! 2.♔xg3 ♖g4+
2...♖h4 3.♔xh4 ♘f8 will transpose to the main line.
3.♔h3 ♖h4+!
It is very much possible that many players will miss this defensive idea for Black.
3...g5 4.h8♕ ♖h4+ 5.♕xh4 gxh4 6.♘xd7+-; 3...♖g1 4.♔h2+-.
4.♔xh4 ♘f8!
The best practical defence. While solving studies, puzzles and complex positions, it is extremely important to find good practical defensive resources for the opponent and then refute them for good measure.
4...♘e5?! 5.♔h5 ♘f7 6.♔g6 ♘h8+ 7.♔xg7; the knight is dominated and the pawn queens.

5.♘c8+!

5.h8♕? ♘g6+ 6.♔g5 ♘xh8 7.♘c8+ ♔b7 8.♘d6+ ♔c6 9.♗b4 e5=; there is no way to trap the knight on h8.

5...♔b7

5...♔b8 6.♗f4+! ♔b7 7.♘d6+ ♔c6 8.h8♘!.

6.♘d6+ ♔c6 7.h8♘!

This usually happens in Afek's studies!

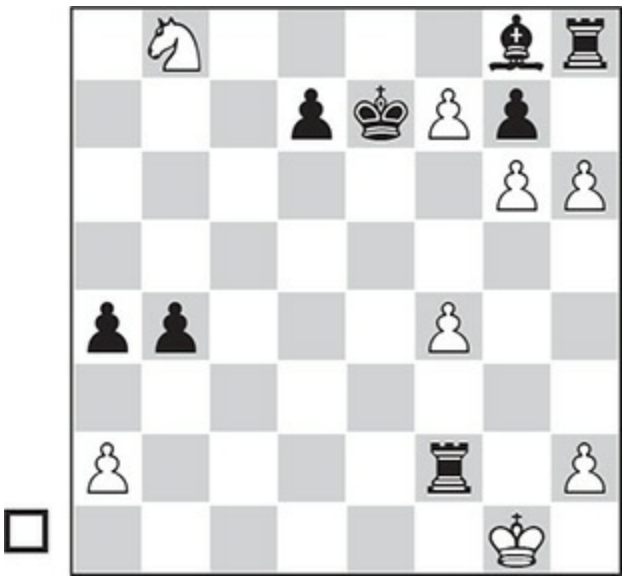
7...♔xd6 8.♗b4+

And White wins.

Game 103 Level 4

David Gurgenidze

Study, 1974



White to play and win

A crazy-looking position, but for those who have solved many studies in the past, it will not come as a surprise.

Black has many more pieces than White, but they are not ideally placed, and White has many advanced pawns – all the ingredients for an interesting fight! We should be curious about one thing though: what are the pawns on the queenside doing when the scene of action appears to be on the kingside?

1.hxg7 ♖g2+!

A fantastic resource from Black. There is a constant yearning in-built in humans. We are always looking for something that can fill the void in us, a constant companion, despite the fulfilment of our current needs. What makes chess so exciting and addictive is the seemingly endless opportunities it provides for human intelligence to develop resources that can be found only with an extraordinary effort.

2.♔f1!!

The point of the next few moves will become obvious after a few more moves.

Let's see what happens after the more obvious move: 2.♔xg2? ♖xh2+ 3.♔xh2 ♗xf7 4.♘xd7! (4.gxf7? ♔xf7 5.♘xd7 b3 6.axb3 a3! 7.♘c5 a2 and the b3-square is blocked by our own pawn; this is why White loses) and now:

A) 4...b3 5.f5 (5.gxf7? ♔xf7 6.axb3 a3-+; 5.♘e5? ♔f6! 6.axb3 a3 7.gxf7

♔xg7-+) 5...bxa2 (5...♗g8 6.axb3 – Black has to be accurate now – 6...axb3! (6...a3?? 7.f6+ ♔e6 8.f7 ♗xf7 9.♘c5+! ♔f6 10.gxf7 ♔xf7 11.b4+-, vacating the b3-square for the knight) 7.f6+ ♔e6! 8.f7 ♗xf7 9.gxf7 ♔xf7 10.g8♕+ ♔xg8 11.♘f6+ ♔f7 12.♘d5 b2 13.♘c3=; on time!) 6.f6+ ♔xd7 7.gxf7 a1♕ 8.f8♕ will lead to a perpetual check;

B) 4...♗xa2 5.♘e5 (5.f5? ♔xd7 6.f6 ♔e8-+), and White should make a draw without trouble: 5...♔f6 6.♘d3= or 5...♗g8 6.♘c6+ ♔f6 7.♘xb4=.

2...♖f2+!

Both White and Black are persisting, with Black giving rook checks and White avoiding the generous offer.

3.♔e1 ♖e2+ 4.♔d1 ♖d2+ 5.♔c1

5.♔xd2 ♖xh2+ 6.♔d3 ♗xf7 7.♘xd7 ♗xg6+.

5...♖c2+ 6.♔b1 ♖b2+ 7.♔a1!

White has to go all the way to the corner of the board and give up the rook pawn. The reason will become apparent towards the very end.

7...♖xa2+

8.♔b1!

White walked all the way just to give up the a2-pawn!

8...♖b2+ 9.♔c1 ♖c2+ 10.♔d1 ♖d2+ 11.♔e1 ♖e2+ 12.♔f1 ♖f2+ 13.♔g1

White has come back to the initial position, with the only difference being that he has lost the pawn on the a-file. Why take so much trouble?

13...♖g2+ 14.♔xg2!

White finally captures the rook at the most appropriate moment.

14...♖xh2+ 15.♔xh2 ♗xf7 16.gxf7 ♔xf7 17.♘xd7 b3

17...a3 18.♘c5+-; 17...♔xg7 18.♘c5+-. White's knight stops the queenside pawns and he will win with the f-pawn helped by the king.

At this point, there is no pawn on a2. This is the reason why White wins the game. He had to visualise this at the very beginning. A pawn on a2 would have led White to lose a crucial tempo that would have lost the game.

18.♘e5+! ♔xg7 19.♘c4 b2 20.♘a3! 1-0

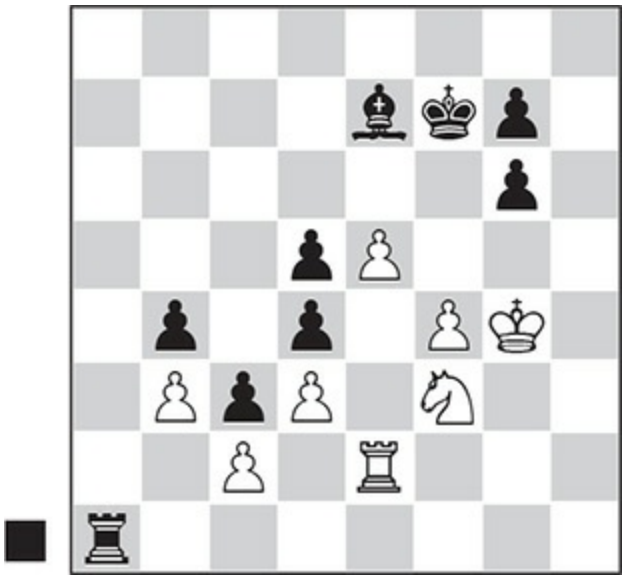
Of course, not 20.♘xb2?? a3 and it is Black who wins.

Game 104 Level 4

Anish Giri 2780

Ding Liren 2816

Shenzhen 2018 (1)



33...♖f1??

This is a blunder that misses White's reply completely. Luckily for Black, Anish did not play the refutation and returned the compliment.

33...♗c5 34.♖e1 ♖a2 35.♖e2 ♖a1= is one likely variation, although not forced!

34.♖h2?

A) 34.e6+? ♔e8 (34...♔f6 35.♖e1 (35.♘xd4 ♗d6 36.♘f3=) 35...♖xe1 36.♘xe1 ♔xe6= 37.♘f3 ♔f6 38.♘xd4 ♗c5=) 35.♘xd4 ♗d6⇋;

B) 34.♖e1! was the refutation of Black's 33rd move: 34...♖f2 (34...♖xe1?? 35.♘xe1 ♗c5 36.♘f3 ♗b6 37.♘g5+ and White wins by pushing f4-f5 at the right time) and now:

B1) 35.e6+ ♔e8! 36.♘xd4 (36.♖a1 ♗f6) 36...♗d6! 37.♘e2 (37.♘f3) 37...♖h2! 38.♔g3 ♖h8! (38...♖h6 39.♘d4 g5 40.♘f5) 39.♖a1 (39.♘d4 ♖f8!) 39...♔e7 40.♘d4 ♗c5⇋;

B2) 35.♖c1 ♗c5 36.♔g3 ♖e2=;

B3) 35.♔g3 ♖xc2 36.e6+ ♔e8 37.♘xd4 ♖a2 38.♖h1 ♗f8!∓;

B4) 35.♘xd4 ♗c5 (35...g5!? 36.fxg5 ♖g2+ 37.♔f4 ♗xg5+ 38.♔f3 ♖h2 39.e6+ ♔e7 40.♘f5+ ♔e8 41.e7+-) 36.e6+! – both players probably missed this – 36...♔f6 (36...♔e7 37.♘c6+ ♔e8 38.♖a1+-)

analysis diagram

37.♔g3! (37.♘c6 ♗e7; 37.♘b5 ♖g2+ 38.♔h3 ♖g1 39.♖e2 ♖h1+ 40.♔g3 ♖g1+ 41.♔h2 ♖d1; 37.e7 ♗xe7) 37...♖d2 38.♔f3! (prophylaxis; 38.♖e5 ♗xd4 39.e7 ♗xe5 40.e8♕ ♗d6 41.♕d7 ♗e7 42.♕c6+ ♔f7 43.♕xd5+ ♔f8±; 38.f5 gxf5; 38.♘c6 ♗f2+; 38.♔h3 ♖f2) 38...♖h2 (38...♗e7 39.♘b5! ♖xc2 40.♘c7) 39.♘c6 ♗e7 (39...♖h8 40.e7 ♖e8 41.♖e5 ♗xe7 42.♘xb4+-) 40.♘e5+-.

34...♖c1 35.♖g2 ♗c5 36.♘g5+ ♔e7 37.♘f3 ♔f7 38.♘g5+ ♔e7 39.♘f3 ½-½

8. Some players spend too much time while analysing

It can otherwise be called poor time management. Over-thinking happens primarily due to checking the same variation multiple times and to the inability to trust our decisions. When we think more than necessary, we are spending more than the essential **energy/effort/time**. Some players spend a lot of time on one idea and find it difficult to switch to another viewpoint. This happens because they feel compelled to make their original idea work at any cost.

Getting distracted by fancy variations and not checking the answers thoroughly is also related to this ailment. Some players never stop their analysis of a particular variation and go into many unnecessary variations in their excitement. We should see only what is required and not go on a wild goose chase. A player should learn to use his time and energy efficiently through proper practice. Compare this with an out-of-shape person and an in-shape person running at the same time. One gets tired soon because he is ill-trained. With a trained mind, we learn to focus our energy and complete our job with minimum resources.

Solution:

Keep moving from one idea to another if an idea does not seem to work. While checking your analysis, do it thoroughly. By doing a quick preliminary analysis of our possibilities, we can catch mistakes early, rather than being misled into a long variation unnecessarily.

9. Wrong move order

Sometimes, our idea is correct, but our move order is not. We should try making our idea work with different move orders. The analogy I usually give my students goes as follows:

In the process of brushing our teeth, there are two steps involved:

a) Take the brush and apply toothpaste, and

b) Brush your teeth with it.

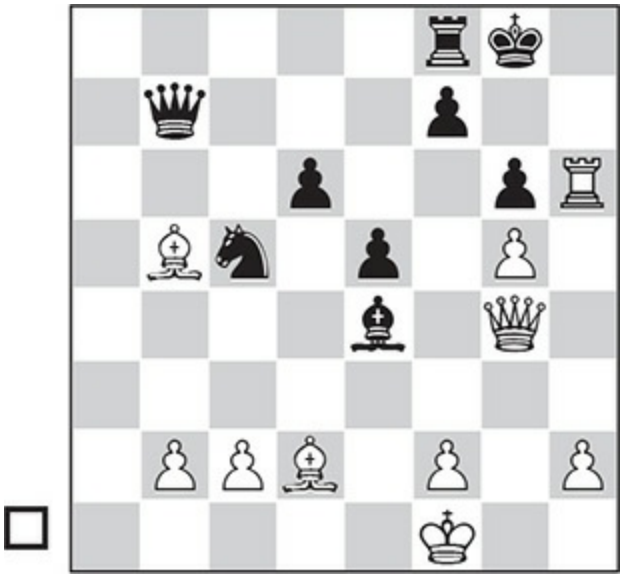
Now, imagine reversing the order in practice. First, we brush our teeth, and then we apply toothpaste to the brush. The outcome will be completely different! Some players have this ‘everything is the same; both moves are the same’ attitude when they see two similar-looking options.

Game 105 Level 3

Ian Nepomniachtchi 2784

Magnus Carlsen 2863

chess24.com 2020

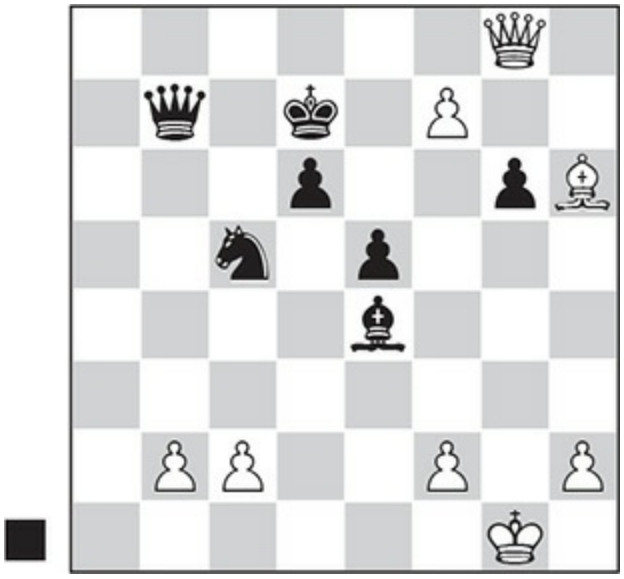


TASK 1: *Find the correct continuation for White. Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

23.♕h3!

23.♕h4? ♕xb5+ 24.♔g1 f6! 25.♖h8+ ♔f7 26.♕h7+ (26.♖h7+ ♔e6-+ is one of the points of 23.♕h3!) 26...♔e8 27.gxf6 ♕b7! 28.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 29.♗h6+ ♔e8 30.♕g8+ ♔d7

A) 31.f7??



analysis diagram

TASK 2: *Black to play and win. Time to think: 5 to 8 minutes.*

31...♕b4!! (first lure White to play 32.c3, and only then take the b2-pawn; here, we can see the importance of getting the move order correct while calculating to meet our objective; 31...♕d5?! 32.f8♘+! ♔c6 33.♕xd5+=; 31...♕xb2? 32.♕e8+ ♔c7 33.f3! ♗xf3 34.♕e7+ ♘d7 35.♔f2! (this is possible since the white pawn is on c2!) 35...♗d5 36.f8♕ ♕xc2+, Black will be forced to give perpetual check and be satisfied with a draw) 32.c3 ♕xb2! 33.♕e8+ ♔c7 34.♕e7+ ♘d7 35.f3 ♗xf3 36.f8♕ ♕g2#; this is possible since the white pawn is not on c2!;

B) 31.♕f7+! ♔c6 32.♕xb7+ ♔xb7 33.f7 ♘e6 34.f8♕ ♘xf8 35.♗xf8=.

23...♕xb5+

23...♗g2+ 24.♕xg2 ♕xb5+ 25.♔g1 ♕d7 26.♕f3+- or 25...♕xb2 26.♕h3+-.

24.♔g1 f6!? 25.♖h8+ ♔f7 26.♖h7+!

26.♕h7+? ♔e8 27.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 28.gxf6 ♕b7 29.♗h6+ ♔e8 30.♕g8+ will transpose to 23.♕h4 lines.

26...♔g8

26...♔e6 is no longer possible thanks to 23.♕h3!; 26...♔e8 27.♕c8#.

27.♕h6

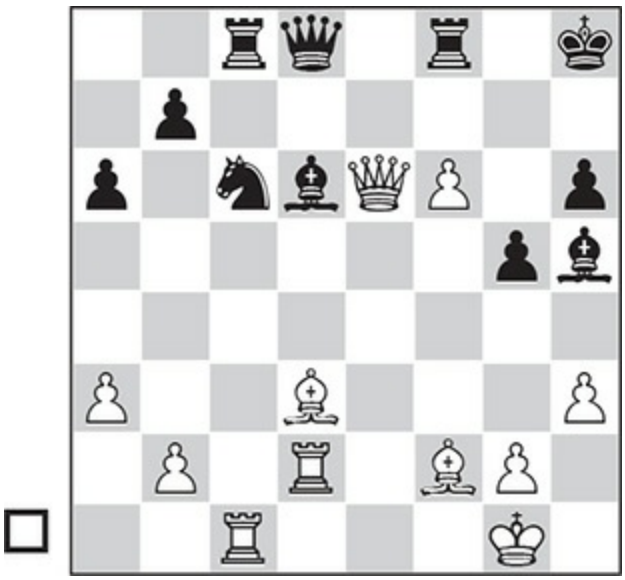
27.gxf6 ♖xf6 28.♖h8+ ♔f7 29.♕c8!+-.

27...♘e6 28.gxf6! ♖xf6 29.♖h8+ ♔f7 30.♕h7+ ♘g7 31.♕g8+ ♔e7 32.♗g5! 1-0

The following position was given to my students for training purposes. It could have arisen from a game in an open tournament. I was with the Indian team as a coach, but do not remember the players involved. I remembered the position and analysed it subsequently.

Game 106 Level 3

Training game position



TASK 1: *White to play and win. Time to think: 10 minutes.*

2.f7

2.♗f5?! does not work: 2...♗h2+ 3.♔xh2 ♕xd2 (double attack) 4.♖c2 ♕d8! 5.f7 ♔g7 6.♗e1! (the bishop is going to the critical diagonal) 6...♕c7+ 7.g3. Now Black has to be accurate to hold the balance: 7...♖cd8 8.♗c3+ ♖d4! 9.♗xd4+ ♘xd4 10.♖xc7 ♘xe6 11.♗xe6 ♔f6, and it will be a draw soon.

2...♔g7

The critical moment. White has multiple interesting continuations, but only

one sequence works:

3.♕e4!

A) 3.♖xc6? enables ♗d4 check, but Black has his own tricks: 3...♗h2+! 4.♔xh2 ♖xc6 5.♕e5+ (5.♕e4? ♗g6 6.♗d4+ ♔h7 7.♕e5 ♖xf7-+) 5...♕f6 and Black survives;

B) 3.♕f5? looks tempting, but does not deliver what White wants: 3...♖h8 4.♖xc6 (to get in ♗d4 check as before, but here Black has to react differently) 4...♖xc6! (4...♗h2+? does not work now: 5.♔xh2 ♖xc6 6.f8♕+! – Black's queen and rook are guarding the critical d4- and h7-squares – 6...♖xf8 7.♕h7+ ♔f6 8.♕xh6++-) 5.♗d4+ ♔f8 6.♗xh8 ♗f4!? (6...♖c1+ 7.♗f1=) 7.♗g7+! ♔xg7 8.♕h7+ ♔f6! 9.♕f5+ and White has nothing more than perpetual check (9.♕xh6+? ♔e7-+);

C) 3.♗g6? and now:

C1) 3...♗h2+? 4.♔xh2 ♕xd2 5.♗xh5 (threatening mate in two with 6.♕g6+) 5...♕f4+ 6.♗g3 ♕f6 7.♕xf6+ ♔xf6 8.♗d6 ♖xf7 9.♖f1+ ♔e6 10.♖xf7+-;

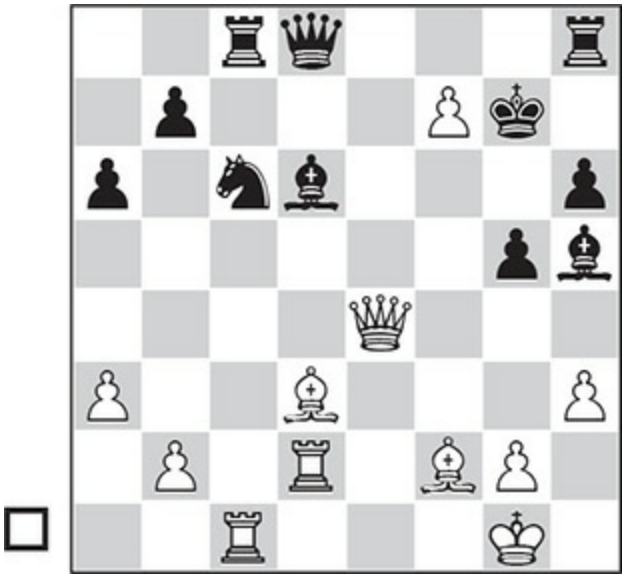
C2) 3...♕e7!? 4.♕xe7 ♘xe7 5.♖xc8 ♖xc8 6.♗xh5 ♖c1+ 7.♖d1 (7.♗d1 ♗f4=) 7...♖xd1+ 8.♗xd1 ♔xf7 9.♗f3. White still keeps some pressure, and Black has a lot of defending to do to survive;

C3) 3...♗xg6? 4.♖xd6 is the point of White's previous move;

C4) 3...♘e5! is a nice resource: 4.♖xc8 (4.♗xh5?? ♖xc1+-+) 4...♕xc8 5.♕xc8 ♖xc8 6.♗xh5 ♖c1+ 7.♖d1 (7.♗d1 ♘c4=) 7...♖xd1+ 8.♗xd1 ♔xf7=.

3...♖h8

3...♖xf7? 4.♕h7+ ♔f8 5.♕xh6+ ♔g8 6.♕xh5+-.



TASK 2: *Time to think: 3 minutes.*

4.♗d4+!

4.♖xc6? is a tempting move that was suggested by many, but it does not work: 4...♖xc6 5.♗d4+ ♔f8 6.♗xh8 ♖c1+ 7.♔f2 (7.♗f1 ♗xf7=) 7...♗xf7 and Black survives again.

4...♘xd4 5.♖xc8!

5.♕xd4+? ♕f6!-+.

5...♕xc8

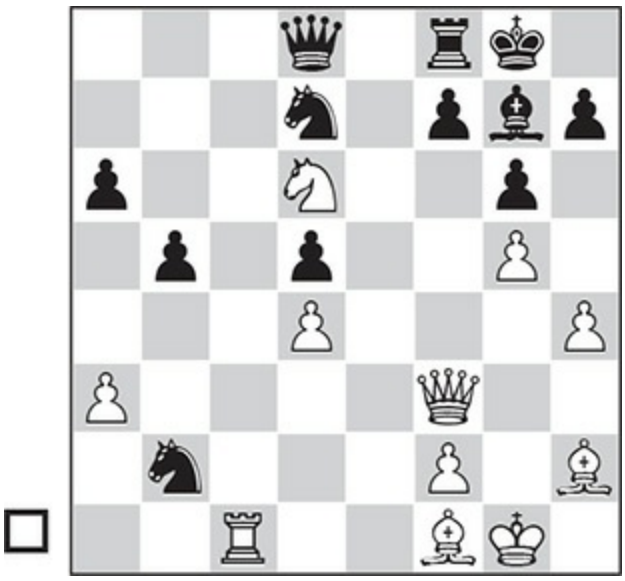
5...♕b6 6.♖g8++-.

6.♕xd4+ ♔xf7 7.♗c4+ 1-0

Game 107 Level 5

Rustam Kasimdzhanov	2695
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	2725

Nalchik 2009 (13)



25.♖c8!

This was missed by White in the game. The exact move order should be found by White.

A) 25.♕xd5?! ♘b6 26.♕b7±;

B) 25.♖c6? was played in the game, which threw all White's advantage away. It soon ended in a draw: 25...♘c4 (25...♘b6 26.♘b7 ♕a8 27.♖xb6 ♕a7=) 26.♕xd5 ♘db6 27.♕e4 ♘d2 28.♕g4 ♘xf1 29.♔xf1 ♘c4 30.♖xa6 ♕e7 31.♔g2 ♖d8 32.♕e4 ♕xe4+ 33.♘xe4 ♗xd4 34.♘d6 ♘xd6 35.♗xd6 ♗g7 36.♖b6 ♗d4 37.♖a6 ♗g7 38.♖b6 ♗d4 39.♖a6 ♗g7 ½-½;

C) 25.♖e1 ♘b6! 26.♖e8 ♖xe8 (26...♕d7 27.♗h3 ♕xe8 28.♘xe8 ♖xe8 29.♗e5!+-) 27.♕xf7+ ♔h8 28.♘xe8 ♕d7!∞.

25...♕e7

25...♕e7 26.♖c6.

26.♖c2!!

26.♖c7?!

analysis diagram

26...♘e5! and now:

A) 27.♕c3?! ♘f3+! (27...♕xd6 28.♗xe5∞) 28.♔h1 (28.♕xf3 ♕xc7 29.♘c4 ♕a7 30.♘xb2 ♕xd4∓) 28...♗xd4 29.♖xe7 ♗xc3 30.♗g2 ♘xh2 31.♘xf7! ♘g4 32.♗xd5⇆;

B) 27.♗xe5 ♕xc7 28.♘e8 ♕e7 29.♘xg7=.

26...♘c4

A) 26...♘a4 loses to 27.♖e2 ♕d8 28.♖e8;

B) 26...♗xd4 and now:

B1) 27.♖e2! ♘e5 (27...♗e5 28.♕xd5+-) 28.♕xd5 ♘bd3 (28...♖d8 29.♖xe5±) 29.♔g2! (29.♕xd4?! ♘f3+ 30.♔h1 ♕xe2!∞) 29...♖d8 30.♕xd4 ♖xd6 31.♕e4! (31.♖xe5 ♘xe5 32.♕xe5 ♕xe5 33.♗xe5 ♖d1≅) 31...♖e6 32.♕a8+! ♔g7 33.♕d5!±;

B2) 27.♕xd5! ♗g7 (27...♗e5 28.♗xe5; 27...♘e5 28.♗e2) 28.♖e2 ♘b6! (28...♕d8 29.♖e8) and now:

B21) 29.♕c6!? ♕d7! (29...♕a7 30.♘e8+-; 29...♕d8 30.♘xf7!; 30.♘b7 ♕d4) 30.♕xb6 ♕g4+ 31.♗g3 ♗d4

analysis diagram

32.♘e4! (32.♘f5 gxf5 33.♕d6 ♘d3 34.♖d2 ♘e1 35.♗g2 ♗c3∓) 32...♕xe4! (32...♗xb6 33.♘f6++-) 33.♕xa6!± (33.♕d6 ♕g4∞) 33...♕g4 34.♔g2;

B22) 29.♕b3 ♕d7 30.♖xb2 ♗xb2 31.♕xb2±.

27.♖e2! ♕d8 28.♖e8!

A brilliant geometry by the white rook to trap the queen on its original square. Harikrishna found this idea pretty quickly while solving the position.

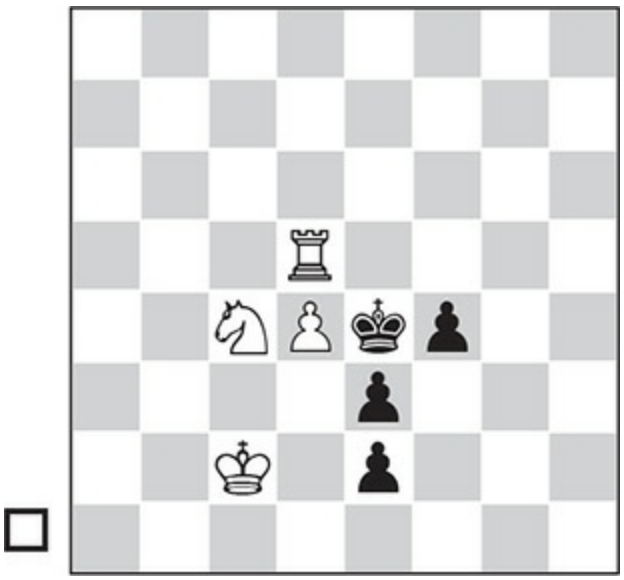
10. A materialistic or greedy approach

Not seeing sacrifices for the opponent, not seeing sacrifices from our own side for short- or long-term gains. Some players simply can’t consider any kind of sacrifices in their analysis. They are very attached to material, and playing with equal material gives them a safe feeling.

Game 108 Level 2

Henri Rinck

Study, 1904



White to play and draw

Since it looks almost impossible to stop the opponent's pawn from queening we need to look at forcing moves. White has to use various available tactical themes to stop Black's pawns from queening:

1.♖e5+! ♔xd4

1...♔f3 2.♖xe3+! fxe3 3.♘e5+ ♔g2 4.♘d3 ♔f1 5.d5 e1♕ 6.♘xe1 ♔xe1 7.d6 ♔f1 8.d7=. Both sides promote, and the game ends in a draw.

2.♖xe3!

Players who are materialistic in their approach tend to miss sacrifices by their opponent or for themselves. They value material more than keeping their king safe or keeping their pieces active.

2...fxe3 3.♘d2!

The final nuance; the threat of a fork stops the danger of queen promotion.

3...e1♕

3...e1♘+ 4.♔d1 ♔d3 5.♘f1, and White saves the game just in time.

4.♘f3+ ½-½

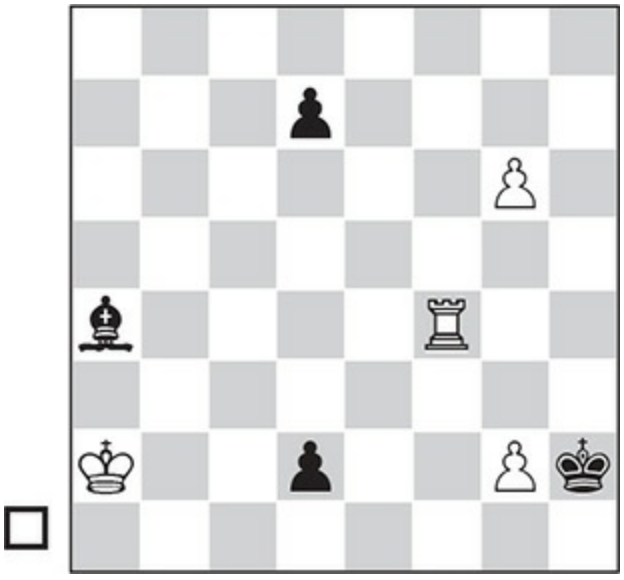
White used the forking theme at various points to deal with Black's idea of queening his pawn. He was able to draw because he was willing to sacrifice material to achieve a higher objective. Some players simply cannot bring themselves to do this.

11. Not using the elimination technique properly

Some players analyse an idea, and then realise that their idea does not work after a round of analysis. They try to make their idea work again and again, and are not willing to accept that their idea was wrong to start with. They are not willing to even consider that their idea could be bad. Instead, the player gets upset. The other version of this is **Eliminating the right move for the wrong reasons.**

Solution:
Accept that not all our moves or ideas are going to work in our favour at all times; when they do not work, simply consider other ideas seriously.

Game 109 Level 2
Leonid Kubbel
Study, 1909



White to play and win

Both sides have passed pawns, and it seems that a race is going to be the decider in this position. White is up an exchange, but Black's passed pawn is more advanced, so this seems to be a balancing factor. Victory may depend on a solitary tempo, and this gives the position an energetic character.

1.♖h4+!

A very important nuance, driving Black's king to a worse square and in the end gaining the vital tempo that is needed for victory.

A) A direct approach like 1.g7? doesn't work due to 1...♗b3+ 2.♔xb3 d1♕+-+;

B) 1.♖f1 d1♕ 2.♖xd1 ♗xd1 3.g7 ♗g4 4.g8♕ ♗e6+ 5.♕xe6 dxe6 6.g4 e5 7.g5 (7.♔b2 e4 8.♔c2 e3 9.♔d3 ♔g3=) 7...e4 8.g6 e3 9.g7 e2 10.g8♕ e1♕=;

C) 1.♖d4 transposes to the 1.♖f1 lines.

1...♔g1

1...♔g3 2.♖d4 d1♕ 3.♖xd1 ♗xd1 4.g7 ♗g4 5.g8♕ – pinning the bishop against the king is a key point of White's important first move.

2.♖d4 d1♕ 3.♖xd1+ ♗xd1 4.g7 ♗g4 5.g8♕ ♗e6+ 6.♕xe6 dxe6 7.g4 e5 8.g5 e4 9.g6 e3 10.g7 e2 11.g8♕+ 1-0

Queening with check is another fine point that had to be visualised on the very first move! Some players will keep trying to make 1.♖f1 or 1.♖d4 work for a very long time, without accepting at some point that they do not work. Not being willing to eliminate bad ideas from the list of possibilities is a common problem for many upcoming players.

12. A player sees one move with a particular piece and goes to another piece or pawn without seeing other essential or relevant moves with that piece when it does not work

We should complete all good moves with a piece and then move on to another piece in such situations.

13. Sometimes, our mind goes blank and cannot recollect the position we saw earlier

At some point, we get stuck and don't know what to do. This could be due to low energy levels, lack of proper rest, poor concentration, etc.

Solution:
While making candidate moves, do it properly, so you will always have some other idea to fall back on when this happens. Solve more positions in training and teach yourself the need to keep a high alertness level for a long time, improve your concentration and take adequate rest between games.

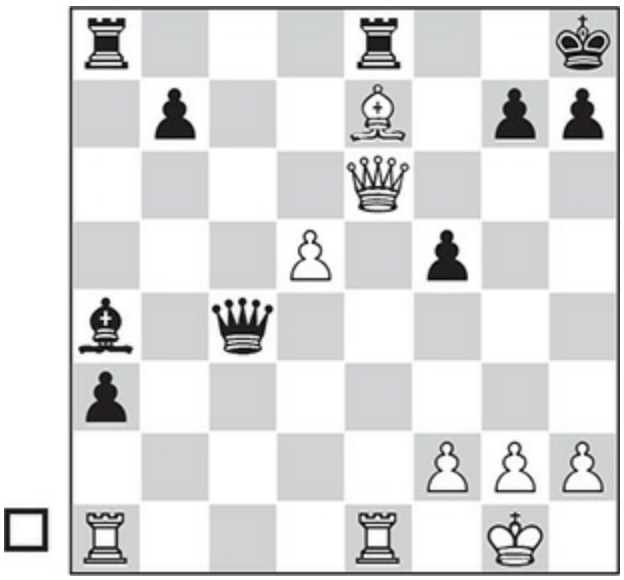
14. The position is simply too complex to analyse and come to a correct conclusion

In such situations, a confident player may either choose to intuitively take a confident decision by quickly trusting his instincts. Alternatively, a player can delve deeply into the position and struggle to find his way through the complications. The second approach is a risky proposition for players who tend to get into time trouble. However, this is the approach they are more likely to take. This is not because they believe in their analytical skills, but more about their inability to trust their instincts and their fear of making mistakes while making their decision.

Game 110 Level 4

Veselin Topalov	2796
Gata Kamsky	2725

Sofia 2009 (7)



Black's a-pawn is quite advanced, but White has a good central piece placement and a formidable central passed pawn as well. The presence of opposite-coloured bishops with major pieces remaining on the board usually signals an advantage for the side who can create attacking chances.

28.♖ec1?

White stumbles and goes in the wrong direction.

A) 28.♕xf5!?=;

B) 28.♖xa3!. Getting rid of Black's passed pawn is a front runner among the candidate moves. However, there are lots of nuances in the follow-up: 28...♗b3 (28...♗c6 29.♗f6!!+-). Perhaps White rejected this line, thinking the d-pawn would fall, but he has a very surprising way to keep the initiative going: 29.♗f6!! gives up a piece to open up Black's castled king position: 29...gxf6 30.♕xf6+ ♔g8 31.♖xa8 (31.♕g5+ ♔h8) 31...♖xa8

analysis diagram

B1) 32.h4!. White needs to make luft for his king, and at the same time uses the h-pawn as a participant in his future attack:

B11) 32...♕a6 33.d6 ♗f7 (33...♕c6 34.♖e3 ♗f7 35.♖g3+ ♗g6 36.h5+-) 34.♕g5+ ♗g6 35.d7+-;

B12) 32...♕xd5 33.♖e7 (33.♖e3? ♕d1+ 34.♔h2 ♗f7! 35.♖g3+ ♗g6=; the h5-square is under control) 33...♕d1+ 34.♔h2 ♕g4 35.♖e3!

♖f8 (35...f4 36.♖e5+-)

analysis diagram

B121) 36.♕h6. In this line, White's queen is somewhat less mobile on h6 compared to a more central square, and this may be enough for Black to equalise the game: 36...f4! (36...♕b4 37.♖g3+ ♔f7 38.♕g7+ ♔e6 39.♖e3+ ♔d5 40.♖xb3 ♕xb3 41.♕xf8 ♕c2± Sutovsky) 37.♖xb3 (37.♖e5 ♖f5 38.♖e8+ ♔f7) 37...♖f7!± 38.♖b6! f3! 39.g3 ♕d4=;

B122) 36.♕e7! (centralisation!) 36...♖f7 37.♕d8+ ♖f8 38.♕c7! f4 39.♖xb3 ♖f7 (39...♕xh4+ 40.♖h3+-; 39...f3 40.g3+-) 40.♕b8+ ♔g7! (40...♖f8?? 41.♕xb7+-) 41.♕e5+±. Black's king is still open and with only major pieces left on the board, he has to solve a lot more problems in defence, despite material equality and relatively little material remaining on the board.

B2) 32.h3 is not as good because it does not use the h-pawn as an attacking unit: 32...♕a6! (32...♕c7 33.♖e3+-) 33.d6 ♕c6 (33...♗f7 34.♕g5+ ♔h8 35.♕xf5+-) 34.♖e3 ♗f7!=. Compare this with the 32.h4 line where White had the option of ♖g3 followed by h4-h5 !

28...♗c2! 29.♕d7?

It does not make sense to let Black's a-pawn live.

29.♕e3 ♖ad8 30.♕xa3 ♖xd5∓.

29...a2∓ 30.d6 b5 31.♕b7

31...♖eb8?

31...b4 32.d7 ♖eb8, and Black is winning.

32.♕c7 ♖c8?

32...♗d3! 33.♖xc4 bxc4 34.♕xb8+ ♖xb8 35.h4 ♖b1+ 36.♔h2 ♖xa1 37.d7 ♖h1+ 38.♔g3 f4+ 39.♔xf4 h5 40.d8♕+ ♔h7 41.♗f6! would have led to a draw.

33.♕xc4 ♖xc4 34.d7 ♗b1 35.♖d1!

35.♖xc4 bxc4 36.d8♕+ ♖xd8 37.♗xd8 c3 38.♗a5 c2 39.♗d2+-.

35...♔g8 36.d8♕+ ♖xd8 37.♗xd8 ♗c2 38.♖dc1 b4 39.♖xa2 b3 40.♖a8 ♔f7 41.♖b8 ♔e6 42.♖e1+ ♔d5 43.♗e7 ♖a4 44.♗f8 ♖a7 45.h4 1-0

CHAPTER 6

Improving calculation through solving studies

In my days as a chess player, I was not exposed to solving studies (or compositions) until I was very close to becoming International Master strength. Back then, I used to think of studies as positions that are not useful to improve our practical skills and are composed just for fun and creativity. I probably formed this impression because composers are not as well-known as players. If composers were as famous as the players were, probably we would regard them and their work with the seriousness they deserve. Another reason for this mindset could be the lack of good books or databases on studies back then.

Subsequently, I found that most top players around me were keenly interested in solving studies as and when they could access them. Once I started my career as a coach, I started using all possible training methods to improve my students' calculation skills. Solving studies very soon became one of my favourite methods.

Whenever I feel my student's calculation skills are not up to the mark, I will make them solve studies for three to four hours a day for around three to five days in a row. Usually, the students will show significant improvement in their calculation skills. Choosing the appropriate level of studies is critical in this regard.

In studies, each unit on the board has relevance; otherwise, they would not be present. By solving studies, we will learn to appreciate using every unit in the position in our analysis. No small detail is ignored.

I have seen that many coaches are hesitant to employ study-solving as a training method (at 1500 to 2200 levels) for various reasons:

1. Suppose the coach gives studies that are too difficult for the student. In that case, it could severely demotivate the student, and he can lose confidence

in his calculation skills.

2. Suppose the coach gives studies that are too easy for the student. The student will not find it challenging enough and could lose interest in study-solving.

3. Choosing the correct level of study for the student is challenging and needs to be done with care. One good way to do this is by presenting a certain position to a different set of students. From the students' reactions, the coach can establish the difficulty level of the study.

4. The time to be taken to solve a study poses a very tricky challenge. Too little time can make the player feel rushed, and too much time can make the player unproductive with boredom!

5. While the player is solving a study, it might appear to an outsider that the coach is simply giving unproductive work to the student and wasting time during the class.

6. I have seen that solving a study can take anywhere from 5 to 40 minutes, depending on the study and the player's abilities.

7. While solving studies, importance should be given to getting the correct solution, rather than solving them quickly.

8. Once a player learns to solve studies correctly, his speed will naturally get better as he solves more studies.

How to teach calculation skills to our students?

Young kids must learn how to calculate variations and spot tactics (sacrifices) quickly. Without being good in tactics and calculation, it is impossible to become a good chess player. While calculating variations, not all moves will be complex. There will be one or two critical moves/complex moves/not-so-apparent moves. Such challenging moves can come up anywhere in our analysis: either at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of a variation. Being alert throughout gives us a better chance of catching them as they appear.

Give the students simple puzzles during class and ask them to write down the solution, and the coach can check them individually.

Essential tips in this regard are:

1. Students should **not move pieces** while solving puzzles.

2. Give students **enough time to think** and analyse and do not rush them and put pressure on them.

3. A coach should know how much time will be required by a student to solve the position of a particular difficulty level. Once that time limit is reached, ask the student to write down whatever he has analysed until then and present it. Give situations that are easy at first and then slowly increase the difficulty level.

4. Many kids get **only the first move correct**, but not the subsequent moves. This habit should be discouraged. Tell the kids that getting the answer right until the end is very important.

5. By giving the same position to different groups of kids, the coach can learn how difficult it is for other players.

6. We should teach students to **visualise** the position in their mind while solving. If they find it difficult after a few moves, ask them to repeat the moves from the beginning verbally. Usually, they get the position clearly in their mind after this. As they solve more puzzles without moving pieces, their visualisation improves.

7. Teach students to consider **forcing moves** before quiet moves. Forcing moves are: 1) Check 2) Capture 3) Threat/attack 4) Pawn breaks. In any position, teach them to list all the checks first. If checks do not work, ask them to list the captures in the position. Then analyse each capture one by one and see if they are good. If captures also do not work, ask them to list all threats/attacking moves in the position. Analyse them one by one, and so on. If the children learn to see forcing moves first, they will calculate very well, not only for the first move in the position but for all subsequent moves, also.

8. Many times, students will miss good moves or the best defence for the opponent. Teach kids to find the best moves for the opponent as well.

9. Teach students to **make a list of moves before analysing** any position (candidate moves). *In t*his way, they will learn to see more than one move at every turn.

10. Many times, **students stop their analysis in the middle of a**

variation. Encourage them to continue further until the forcing moves come to an end.

I have seen many players and coaches struggle to find the correct difficulty level of studies for their current strength.

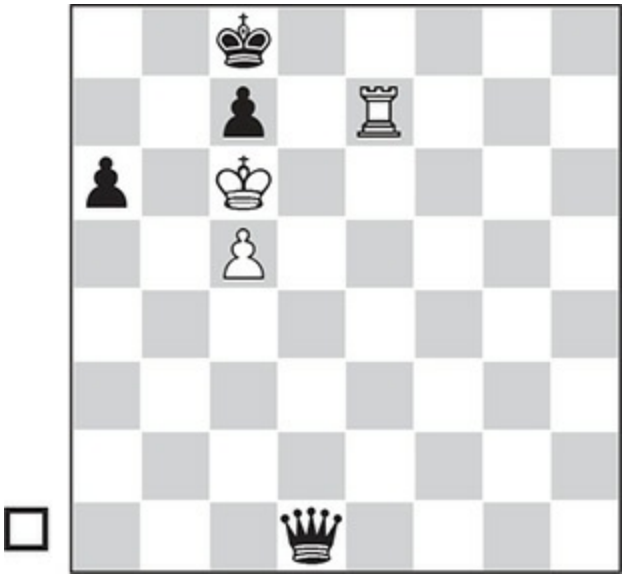
A few suggestions for players solving Level 1 and 2 studies:

1. You have to believe that you will be able to solve these positions with a good effort. If you start solving with self-doubts, it will make the whole journey less worthwhile.
2. Improvement is possible when we believe in ourselves. We should not have doubts that we can learn and improve with proper effort.
3. When you have completed the analysis of a position, try to see it only as the first round of analysis or the preliminary analysis. At the upcoming player level, their efficiency in effort will not be good in general.
4. Once you have completed the preliminary analysis, realise that this is just a starting point and not the end.
5. Check each and every one of the opponent's moves (in studies, this is usually moves for Black) for mistakes. Try other alternatives for the opponent in this way. If there is a good, not so obvious defence available for the opponent, we should catch it at this point and refute it as well.
6. Write down the analysis if required, but in general it is not required. During a tournament game, we do not write down the analysis we do. It is better to remember all the analysis in our head and not forget it!
7. Whenever you feel you are forgetting the position or it is not so clear in your head, try to start from the initial position and go through the analysis slowly until the current position. As you go through the moves, imagine the pieces also moving accordingly. In most cases, this will solve the problem.
8. Please do not worry about how long it takes to solve the studies. In my experience I have seen that it can take anywhere from 5 to 40 minutes to solve studies, depending upon the strength, the experience in solving studies and the concentration level of the player.
9. As we solve more and more studies correctly, the solving speed will

automatically improve. If we focus on time at the initial stage, we are likely to compromise on the quality of our analysis.

10. It is very important to get the correct solution in the first attempt. Try not to develop the habit of solving in a hurry with a half-hearted effort, looking at the solution immediately, realise that you have missed a few details, and move to the next position as though nothing wrong has happened! Expect the best from yourself, as you deserve the correct solution through your fantastic solving effort!

Game 111 Level 1
Leonid Kubbel
Study, 1928



White to play and draw

1.♖e8+ ♕d8

Material-wise, White is completely lost. Hence, to make a draw, he has to either reach a drawn king and pawn ending or try for a stalemate! In studies, in most of the positions that end in a draw this is because of stalemate, although it is very rare in a practical game.

2.♖g8! a5

It will be good if the players at this level find the 2.♖g8! stalemate idea *and*

also the defensive resource 2...a5 for Black, *and* the subsequent continuation that earns White the draw.

2...♕xg8 stalemate is the main idea behind the position.

3.♖xd8+ ♔xd8 4.♔b5

This wins the pawn and gets an easy draw.

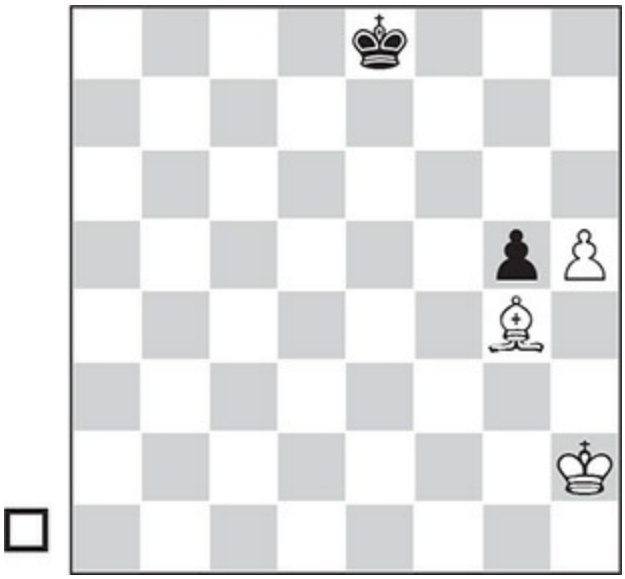
4...♔d7 5.♔xa5 ♔c6 6.♔b4

½-½

Game 112 Level 1

Alexey Troitzky

Study, 1896



White to play and win

1.♗e6!

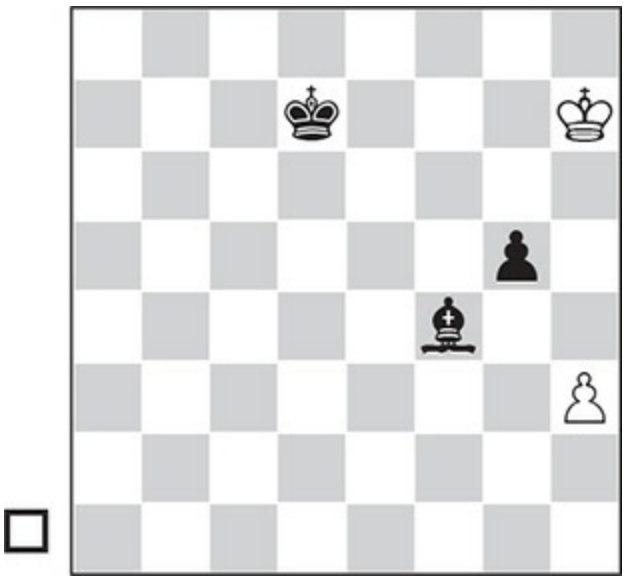
The presence of the rook pawn and wrong-coloured bishop means Black can make an easy draw if he gets his king to the g7- or the h8-square. From this, it is clear that White's objective should be to prevent this at any cost and then bring his king forward. The bishop move takes control of the f7- and g8-squares.

1...♔e7!

Black wants to gain a critical tempo by attacking the bishop and reach the g7-

square quickly if he can.
1...♔f8 will lose quickly to 2.h6 when White has managed to create a wall to prevent Black's king from getting to the drawing zone of the g7-/g8-/h7-/h8-squares.
2.h6 ♔f6
Threatening 3...♔g6 next.
3.♗f5!
White sticks to his objective of not letting Black's king anywhere near the drawing zone.
3...♔f7
Threatening to play 4...♔g8.
4.♗h7 ♔f6
Black is threatening to play 5...g4 followed by 6...♔g5.
5.♔g3 ♔f7 6.♔g4 ♔f6 7.♔h5! ♔f7 8.♔xg5 ♔f8 9.♔f6 1-0
The rook pawn will promote soon.
From this example, we can see an important advantage of study-solving. White's moves were mostly dictated by Black's ideas. White cannot win this position if he does not pay attention to Black's threats. By solving studies, one can learn to pay attention to the opponent's threats and ideas.

Game 113 Level 1
Leonid Kubbel
Study, 1904



White to play and draw

Since this is White to play and draw, we already know that stalemate could be one of the possible means to make a draw, if nothing else works.

1.♔g6

White is threatening to play 2.♔f5, followed by h3-h4, to make a draw.

1...♔e6 2.♔h5

Threatening to play 3.h4, exchange the last pawn, and make a draw.

2...♔f5 3.h4

White persists anyway.

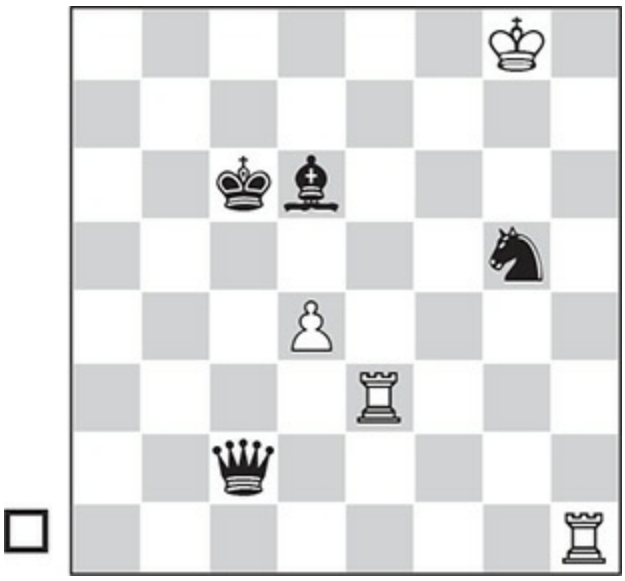
3...g4 ½-½

Stalemate it is!

Game 114 Level 1

Leonid Kubbel

Study, 1905



White to play and draw

1.♖c1!

Material-wise, Black has complete superiority. White has to take extreme measures and do it now to avoid ending up on the losing side.

1.♖c3+?? ♕xc3 2.♖c1 ♕xc1 3.d5+ ♔xd5. I am giving this variation to show that paying attention to the move order is very important while trying to execute our ideas. We can see that the same idea of giving up the two rooks to create a stalemate works only in a particular move order.

1...♕xc1 2.♖c3+!

Luring the queen to c3, which is very important, as we shall see.

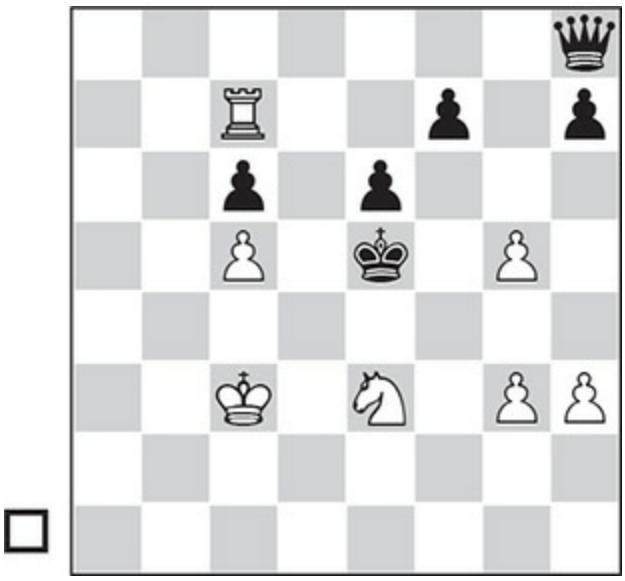
2...♕xc3 3.d5+ ♔b5 ½-½

Stalemate and a draw. In the initial position, it is tough to foresee that the game could end in stalemate.

Game 115 Level 1

Leonid Kubbel

Study, 1911



White to play and win

Looking at this position, we can see that both the black queen and king are oddly placed. White hopes to exploit this to his advantage. In this example, we can see the importance of employing forcing moves in the calculation.

1.♖c8!

By sacrificing his rook, White lures the black queen to move to a place from where it can be won by a fork with the knight.

1...♕xc8

1...♕g7 2.♖g8! ♕xg8 3.♘g4+ ♔d5 (3...♔f5 4.♘h6+; 3...♔e4 4.♘f6+) 4.♘f6+. In all cases, the queen is lost.

2.♘c4+ ♔e4

A) 2...♔d5 3.♘b6+;

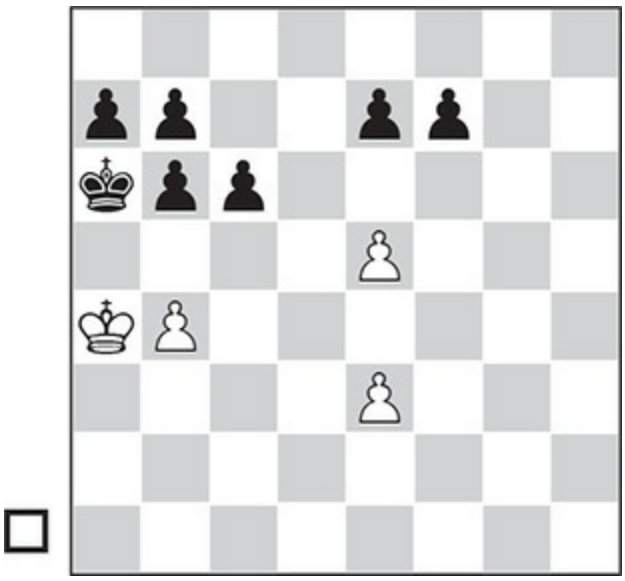
B) 2...♔f5 3.♘d6+.

3.♘d6+ 1-0

Game 116 Level 1

Nikolay Grigoriev

Study, 1928



White to play and win

1.b5+! cxb5+ 2.♔b4

Now Black has two options:

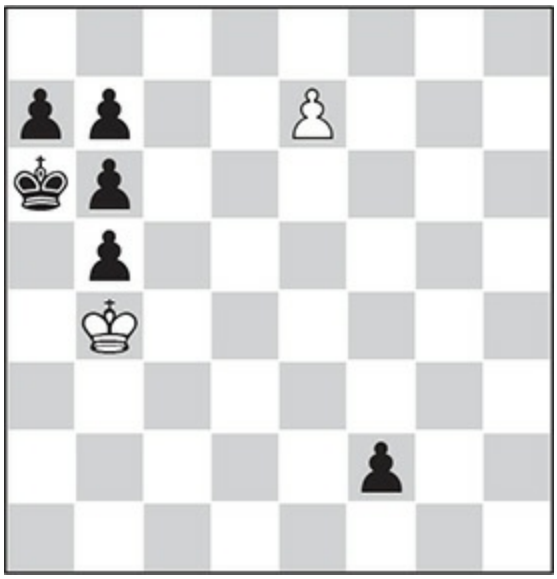
2...f5

2...e6 will lose much faster. This obviously should not be our main line while solving: 3.e4 f6 4.exf6 e5 5.♔b3+-.

3.exf6 exf6 4.e4 f5

Playing for stalemate.

5.e5 f4 6.e6 f3 7.e7 f2



8.e8♘!

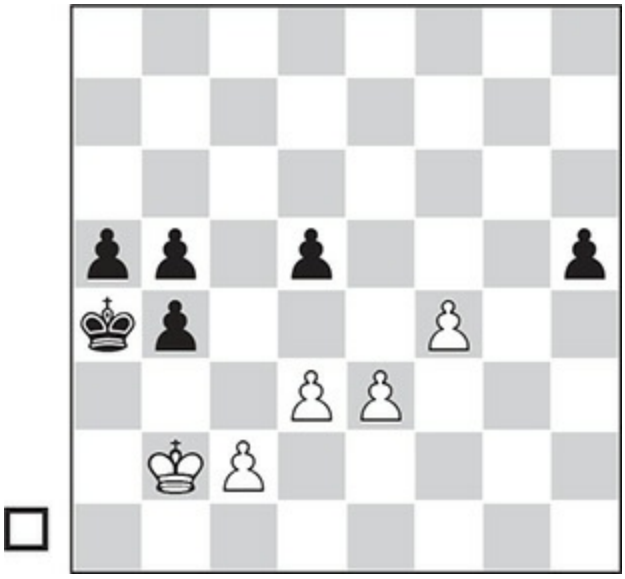
The critical point! Those who have less experience in solving studies will find it a little tough initially to find concepts like underpromotion or stalemate. These are very common in studies and we should start looking for them!

8...f1♕ 9.♘c7#

Game 117 Level 1

Nikolay Grigoriev

Study, 1931



White to play and win

As it turned out, the composer had missed a minor detail in the solution. I did not want to remove this position from the book, despite this minor error. I always believe in the philosophy that the human effort is worth more than the outcome. Hats off to the composer for imagining the creative concept back in 1931!

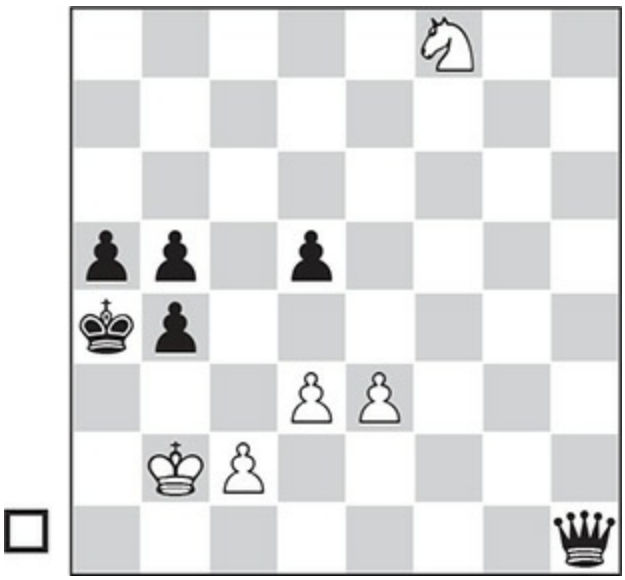
1.f5 h4 2.f6 h3 3.f7 h2 4.f8♘

It was not too late to equalise with 4.f8♕.

4...h1♕

Unexpectedly, with the brilliant resource 4...b3!!, it is Black who is winning,

which was missed by the composer.
Despite this mistake, it does not take away the beauty of the composition in any way.



Let us take this position as the initial position for solving for practical purposes. White to play and win.

5.♘d7 b3

5...♕h8+ 6.d4+-.

6.♘c5+!

Accuracy is important, and it should be learnt at this level.

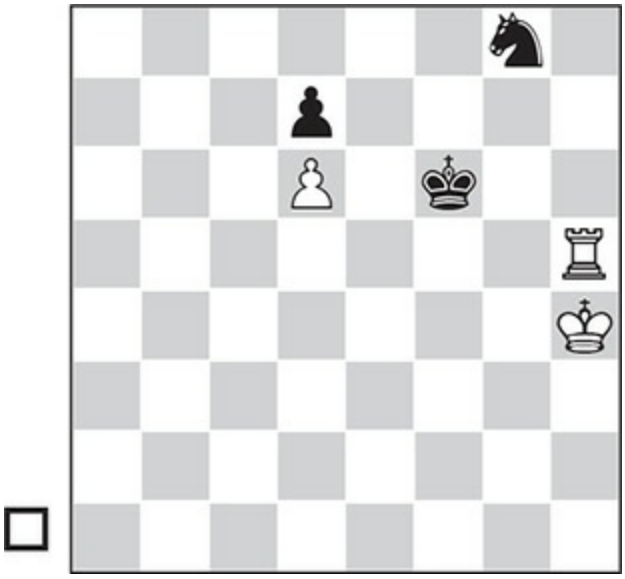
6.♘b6+ ♔b4 7.c3+ ♔c5, and Black's king escapes.

6...♔b4 7.♘a6+ ♔a4 8.cxb3#

Game 118 Level 1

Ernest Pogosyants

Study, 1961



White to play and win

1.♖h8!

1.♔g4? ♔e6 2.♖h8 ♘f6+=; 1.♖h7? ♔e6=.

1...♔g7

The critical position. White has to find the most important move in the whole study.

2.♔g5!!

For many upcoming players, giving up material (sacrificing) is something they cannot do easily. Sacrificing should be learnt as early as possible by upcoming chess players in their careers. Otherwise, they will value material over more important things, like king safety, activity of pieces, attack, etc.

2.♖xg8+ ♔xg8 3.♔g5 ♔g7.

2...♔xh8

2...♘f6 3.♖d8 ♘e4+ 4.♔f4 ♘xd6 5.♖xd7+ ♘f7 6.♔f5 ♔g8 7.♔f6 ♘h6 8.♔g6+-.

3.♔g6!

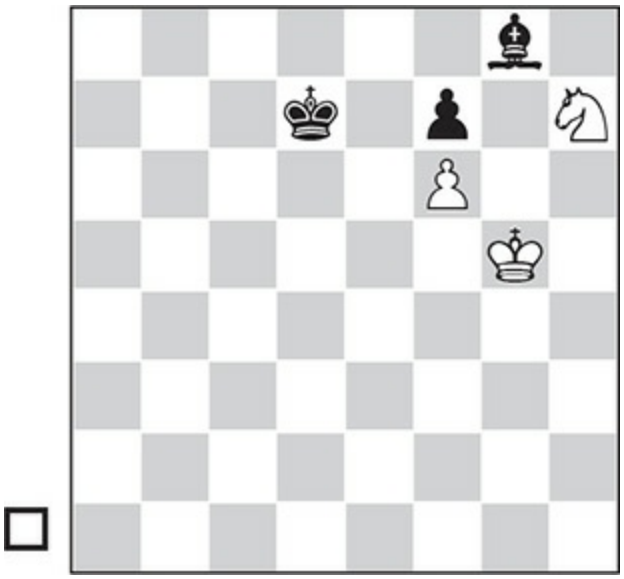
Black has to give up material and loses the pawn ending eventually.

3...♘h6 4.♔xh6 ♔g8 5.♔g6 ♔f8 6.♔f6 ♔e8 7.♔g7 ♔d8 8.♔f7 ♔c8 9.♔e7 1-0

Game 119 Level 1

Ernest Pogosyants

Study, 1961



White to play and win

1.♘f8+

1.♔h6 ♔e6, and Black equalises comfortably.

1...♔e8 2.♔h5!

The critical move in the study. It can be easily missed if we are not alert. Like under-promotion and stalemate, losing a tempo is something that will not come easily for new solvers, but here it is the way to go!

2.♔h6?? ♔xf8-+.

2...♔xf8 3.♔h6 ♔e8 4.♔g7 ♗h7 5.♔xh7 ♔d7 6.♔g8!

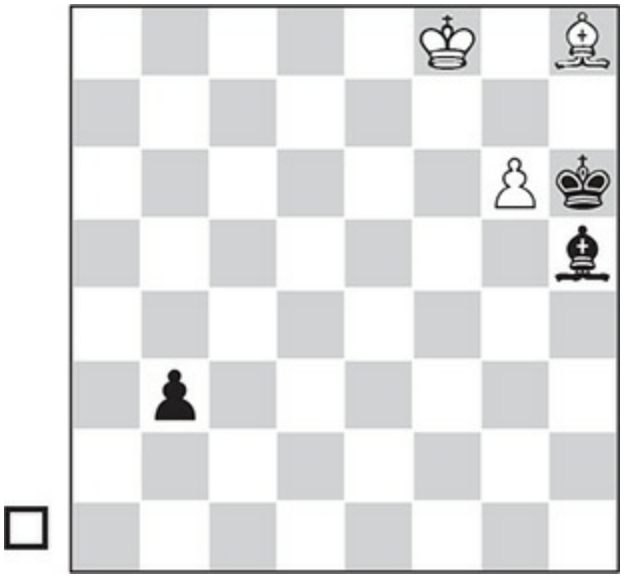
We should not fall for 6.♔g7?? ♔e6 !

6...♔e6 7.♔g7 1-0

Game 120 Level 1

Ernest Pogosyants

Study, 1962



White to play and win

1.g7 ♗f7!

1...b2?! 2.g8♕ b1♕ 3.♕g7#.

2.♔xf7 b2 3.g8♘+!

Again the underpromotion!

The natural 3.g8♕? does not win for White: 3...b1♕=.

3...♔h7

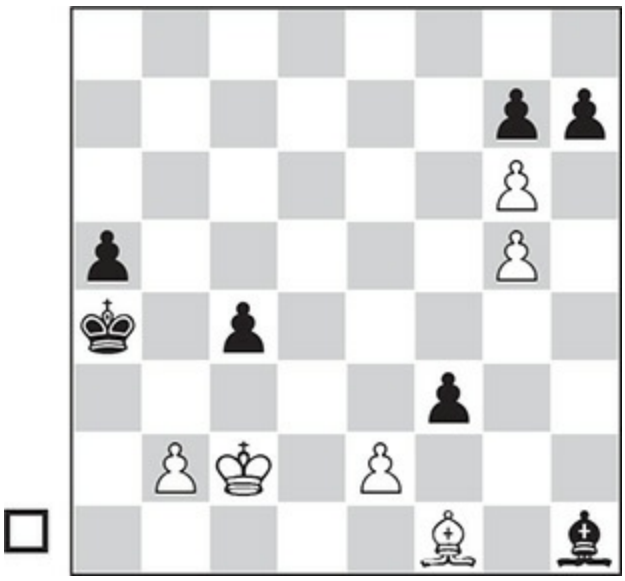
3...♔h5 4.♗xb2. It is very well possible that for many players at this level, this is not a ‘winning’ position... however, theoretically this is won for White, so let’s leave it at that!

4.♗g7 b1♕ 5.♘f6#

Game 121 Level 2

Leonid Kubbel

Study, 1983



White to play and win

The pawns are in contact with each other for both sides, and on the verge of promotion too. Another factor to observe is the dodgy position of Black's king on a4 where it can run into mating ideas.

1.gxh7

1.♔c3? hxg6!= 2.♔xc4? ♗g2!-+. A funny echo of what will eventually happen in the main line.

1...fxe2! 2.♗xe2 ♗e4+ 3.♔c3 ♗xh7

Black has an extra pawn in the endgame, but due to the cornered position of Black's king and bishop, White has a clever way to exploit both features to his advantage:

4.♗h5!

Threatening a mate on e8 and gaining a very vital tempo for caging in Black's bishop on h7 is the key to this position.

4...♔b5

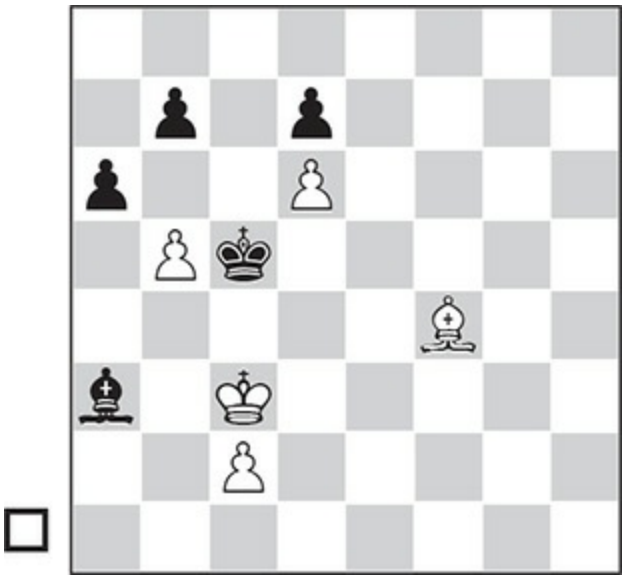
4...g6 does not solve Black's problems: 5.♗g4 ♔b5 6.♗e6, and the bishop is dominated on h7, whereby White is almost a piece up.

5.♗e8+ ♔c5 6.g6! ♗g8 7.♗f7 1-0

Forcing the exchange and the promotion of White's pawn.

Game 122 Level 2

Leonid Kubbel



White to play and win

In a position with a bishop and three pawns for each side, it is far-fetched to think of a zugzwang or a mating threat. But the improbable seems to happen by a cute series of forcing moves. In some ways, this position is similar to the previous study. It makes use of mating ideas with a bishop check against a king in the corner and using this to achieve a favourable exchange, which leads to a pawn promotion.

1.♔b3!

Exploiting the tricky position of Black's bishop to drive Black's king to the corner.

1.bxa6 ♔b6=.

1...♗b4 2.bxa6 bxa6 3.♗e3+ ♔b5 4.c4+ ♔a5 5.♗g5!

Threatening mate and already envisaging the final zugzwang.

5.c5? ♔b5 lets the king out of the cage.

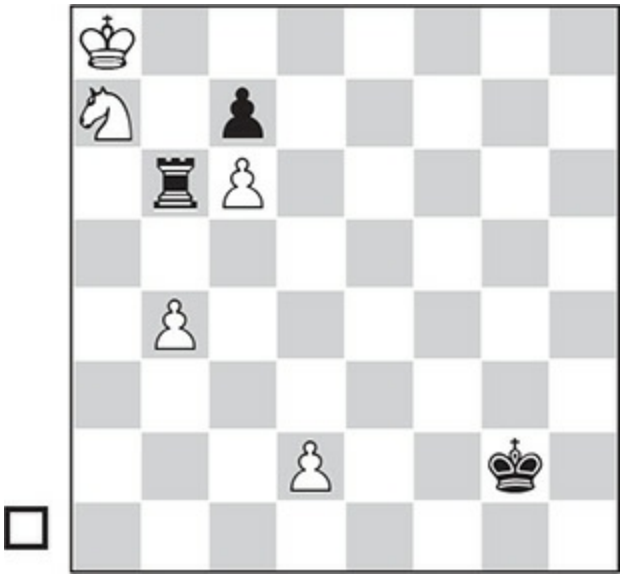
5...♗c5 6.♗d8+ ♗b6 7.♗c7! 1-0

The final nuance. Black has to accept the exchange offered and let White queen his pawn.

Game 123 Level 2

Leonid Kubbel

Study, 1907



White to play and win

Black's king is a bit too far away from the main scene of the action. Nominally, White has a couple of pawns to compensate for the exchange. But the most important factor is the advanced pawn on c6 and White's effort to promote it.

1.b5

Boxing in the rook is the way to go.

The direct approach with 1.d4 ♖xb4 2.d5 ♔f3 3.d6 cxd6 4.c7 ♖c4= does not work.

1...♔f3 2.d4 ♔e4

2...♔f4 3.d5 ♔e5 4.d6+-. This is a recurring theme: either a knight fork or paving the way for the promotion of the c-pawn.

3.♘c8!

Once the king reaches the e4-square, the fork and pawn promotion idea presents itself again.

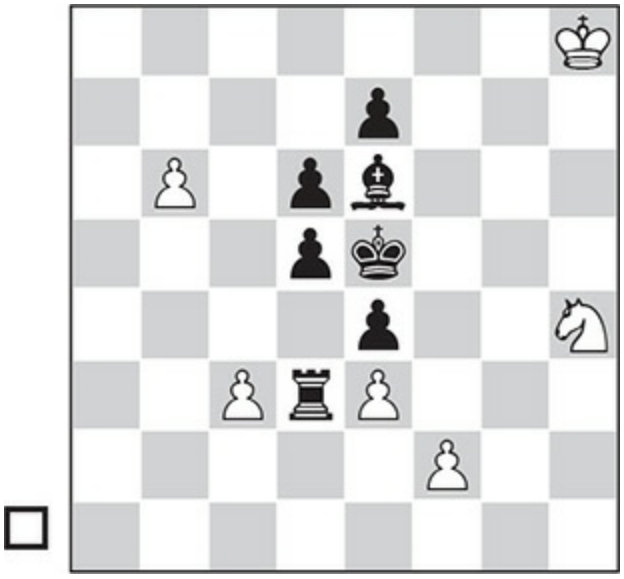
3...♖xb5

3...♔xd4 4.♘xb6 ♔c5 5.♔b7+-.

4.♘d6+ cxd6 5.c7 1-0

The knight gave itself up for the pawn promotion. A nice study once again, based on the simple theme of forks, but well-executed in varied settings.

Game 124 Level 2
Leonid Kubbel
Study, 1909

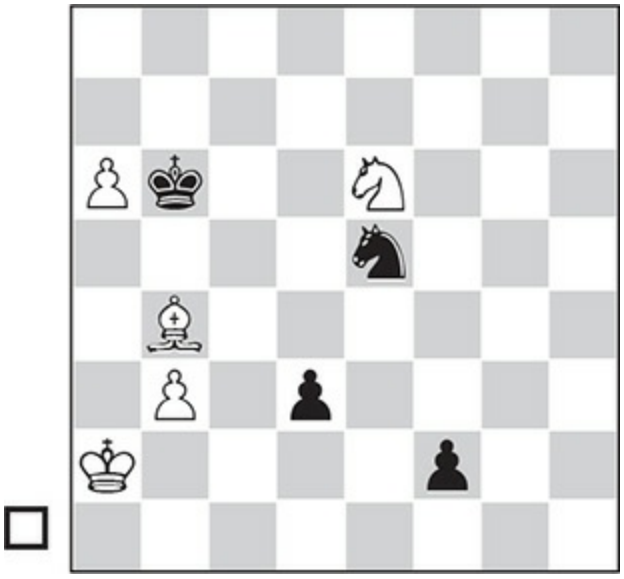


White to play and win

1.b7
1.♕g7? would let Black stop the passed pawn immediately with 1...♗c8-+.
1...♖xc3
1...♖d1 2.b8♕ ♖h1 3.f4+! (White needs this resource to protect his knight on h4) 3...exf3 (3...♔f6 4.♕f8++-) 4.♕b4+-.
2.♔g7!
2.b8♕? fails to 2...♖c8+.
2...♖b3
The critical moment in the study.
2...♖c8 3.♘g6+ ♔f5 4.♘xe7+; this fork decides the outcome. White will capture the rook with his knight and promote his passed pawn.
3.f4+! exf3 4.♘xf3+ ♔e4
4...♔f5 5.♘d4++-.
5.♘d2+ 1-0

White's passed pawn was very important, and various knight fork ideas were instrumental in paving the way for the passed pawn.

Game 125 Level 2
Leonid Kubbel
Study, 1909



White to play and draw

Black has two passed pawns (one on the sixth rank and the other on the seventh). White's lone bishop and knight need to deal with them. As in the previous study, we see that knight forks will come in handy as a fighting technique. But this example is relatively more complicated, and more ingenuity is required to save the game for White. In one of the lines, the stalemating idea is striking, and in other lines, the white pawn on a6 plays its part in keeping Black at bay.

1.♗c5+ ♔xa6

If Black refrains from taking White's passed pawn, White can use it as a means of counterplay: 1...♔c6? 2.♗xf2 d2 3.a7 ♔b7 4.♘c7!, and White even ends up winning! 4...♔xc7 5.a8♕ d1♕ 6.♕a5+! ♔d6 7.♗g3! ♕c2+ 8.♔a3 ♕c1+ 9.♔a4! ♕a1+ (9...♕c6+ 10.♔b4+-) 10.♔b5, and White should win this eventually.

2.♗xf2

2.♘c7+? ♔b7-+.

2...d2 3.♘c5+!

To fight against Black's impending pawn promotion, White needs to use various tactical themes, such as discovered check, fork and even stalemate!

3...♔a5

3...♔b5 4.♘e4, and the fork on c3 saves White. Now he draws Black's king to a new forking range:

4.b4+! ♔xb4

4...♔b5 5.♘e4, and again the fork on c3 saves White.

5.♗e1!!

This is the key idea of the whole study. White sacrifices one of his minor pieces, and at the same time draws the opponent to queen his passed pawn! This is followed by sacrificing his only remaining piece to draw the game by stalemate.

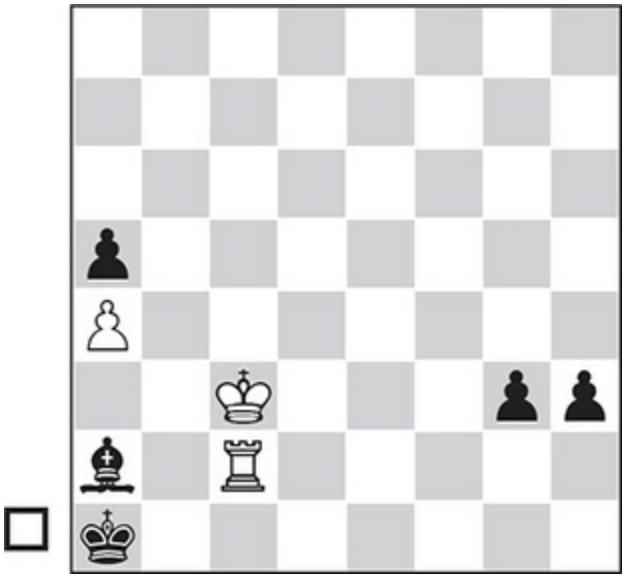
5...dxe1♕ 6.♘d3+ ♘xd3 ½-½

An amazing line of defence.

Game 126 Level 2

Leonid Kubbel

Study, 1911



White to play and draw

Black has two connected passed pawns on the sixth rank. On top of this, he has a bishop too! This means White's material deficit is too large, and how can a lone rook fight against all this? Normal ideas won't do, so White saves himself by means of stalemating ideas!

1.♖c1+ ♗b1 2.♔b3! g2 3.♔a3 h2 4.♖c2!

Since White cannot stop Black's pawns from queening, his only saving idea is to play for stalemate. There exist different stalemating ideas that he needs to visualise.

4...g1♕

4...♗xc2 is the first and relatively simple stalemating idea; 4...♗a2 5.♖xg2 h1♕ 6.♖g1+ ♕xg1 is another variation also based on stalemate that White needs to calculate.

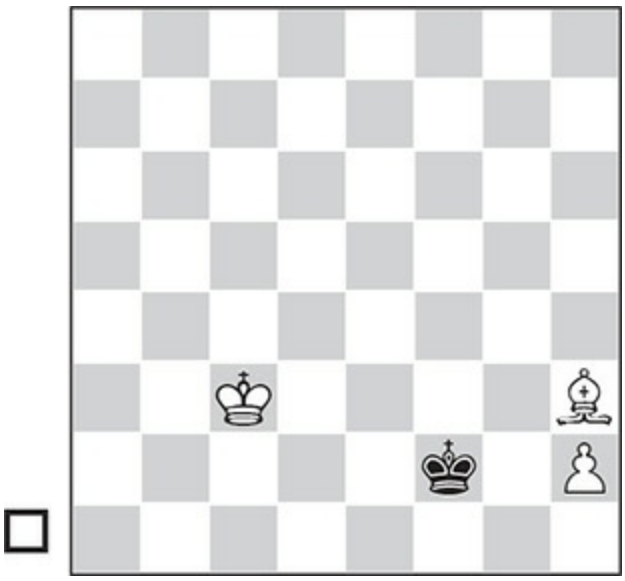
5.♖a2+ ♗xa2 ½-½

The third stalemating idea, although clearly everything is connected.

Game 127 Level 2

Orrin Frink

Study, 1923



White to play and win

A fine study with a number of finesses. The idea of the position is quite simple: White tries to stop Black's king from reaching the h8-square, which will result in a draw because of the wrong-coloured rook pawn.

1.♗d7!!

An absolutely amazing first move, with a clear visualisation of the final position in mind.

Another try would be 1.♗g4 ♕e3 2.h4 ♕f4! (Black gains a crucial tempo here by attacking the bishop) 3.h5 (3.♗h5? ♕g3) 3...♕g5, and Black's king reaches h8 on time.

1...♕e3 2.h4 ♕e4

2...♕f4? 3.♕d4! drives Black's king away from the h-pawn.

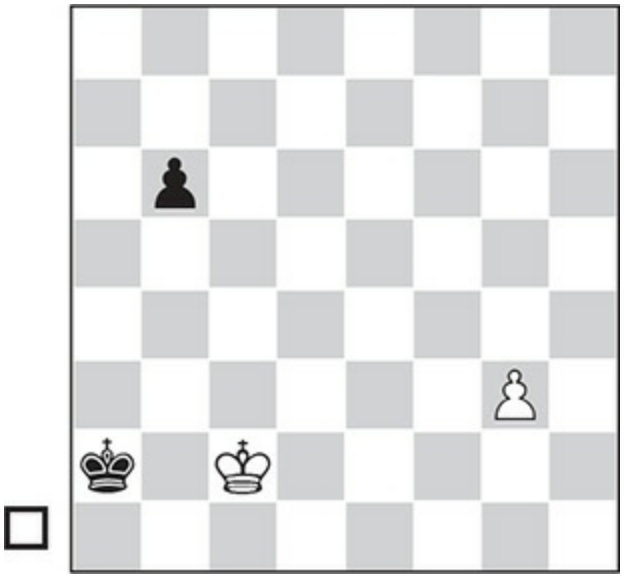
3.h5 ♕e5 4.h6 ♕f6 5.♗e8!! 1-0

White needs his bishop here to keep Black's king away from the critical h8-square. White would also win with the bishop on h5 in this final position, but there is no way to reach that (check the note to the first move).

Game 128 Level 2

Nikolay Grigoriev

Study, 1928



White to play and win

A king and pawn ending in which the pawns on both sides are placed similarly on the third ranks. So, to win this, White needs to use the fact that a2 is a checking square for the g-pawn when it promotes. But in doing so, he also should take enough care to not let Black gain a tempo for his b-pawn promotion based on a check to White's king.

1.♔c3!

The start of a very fine dance of White's king to induce Black's monarch to step into a check when White queens his g-pawn.

The direct approach with 1.g4 does not produced the desired result: 1...b5 2.g5 b4 3.g6 b3+ 4.♔c3 b2 5.g7 b1♕ 6.g8♕+ ♔a1 leads to a draw.

1...♔a3 2.♔c4 ♔a4 3.g4 b5+ 4.♔d3!

Nimble footwork! White's king wants to reach the c2-square without allowing Black to gain a tempo with a check.

If 4.♔c3? ♔a3 and Black will queen his pawn because he gains a tempo with the ...b5-b4 check.

4...♔a3

4...b4 5.♔c2 ♔a3 6.♔b1+-.

5.g5 b4

Had White played 4.♔c3, this pawn move would have come with a check.

6.g6 b3 7.g7 b2

8.♔c2!

With this move, White's king completes his dance and has coaxed his counterpart to fall into a check at the very end!

8...♔a2 9.g8♕+ 1-0

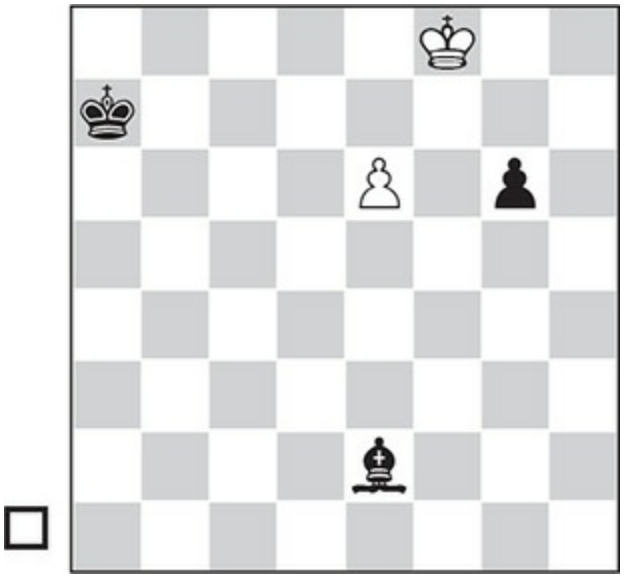
White won with almost magical play! Let us try to break this down into an understandable proposition.

Why did White move his king on c2 and take four moves and come back to c2? Black too was forced to move his king from a2 and come back to the same square, taking four moves. So, both sides have not lost time here, but a deeper look shows that the path taken by White's king has prevented Black's tempo-gainer with the ...b4-b3 check!

Game 129 Level 2

Richard Réti

Study, 1928



White to play and draw

This is a classic Réti study that highlights the geometry of the chessboard. To be more specific, on a chessboard, the straight line is not the shortest space between two squares. Counter-intuitively, walking across a diagonal and making an angle takes the same number of moves to reach a certain square for a king:

1.♔e7!!

The king blocking the path of the passed pawn seems counter-intuitive.

1.♔g7? g5 2.♔g6 g4-+.

1...g5

Otherwise, White was threatening to play 2.♔f6 and stop the pawn.

2.♔d6 g4 3.e7 ♗b5 4.♔c5!

This gains a crucial tempo to come back and stop the g-pawn from queening.

4...♗e8

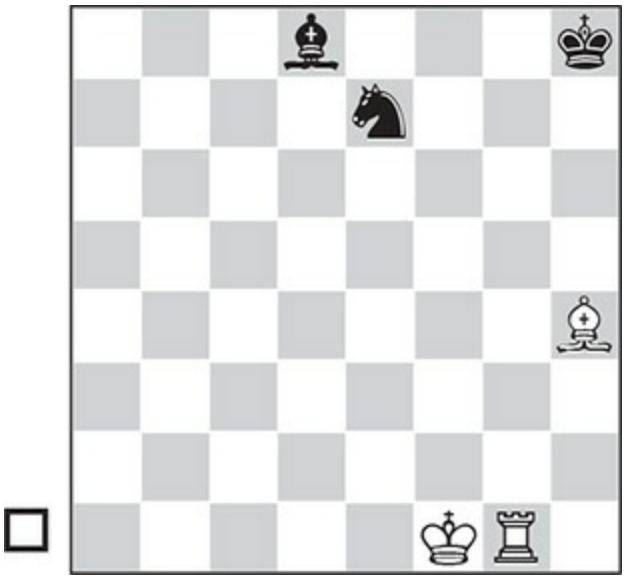
4...g3 5.♔xb5 g2 6.e8♕=.

5.♔d4 g3 6.♔e3 ½-½

The king's path taken in this game teaches us an important geometry of the chessboard, as explained earlier. To be more specific: the route f8-e7-d6-c5-d4-e3-f2 takes the same time as f8-f7-f6-f5-f4-f3-f2.

Game 130 Level 2

Tigran Gorgiev



White to play and win

Black's knight is pinned against his bishop. This, in combination with White's attacking force of rook and bishop, is the key to the position. White needs to use tactical themes like double attack to win material.

1.♗f6+!

1.♖g5 ♔h7 2.♖e5 ♘c6!, and Black escapes.

1...♔h7 2.♖g7+ ♔h6 3.♖f7 ♔g6

3...♘c6 4.♗xd8 ♘xd8 5.♖d7 ♘e6 6.♖d6 picks up the pinned knight.

4.♖f8 ♘c6! 5.♗xd8

It is not over yet for Black, as he still has one last trick up his sleeve:

5...♔g7! 6.♖e8 ♔f7! 7.♖h8 ♔g7 8.♗f6+!

The key move that had to be spotted in the initial position.

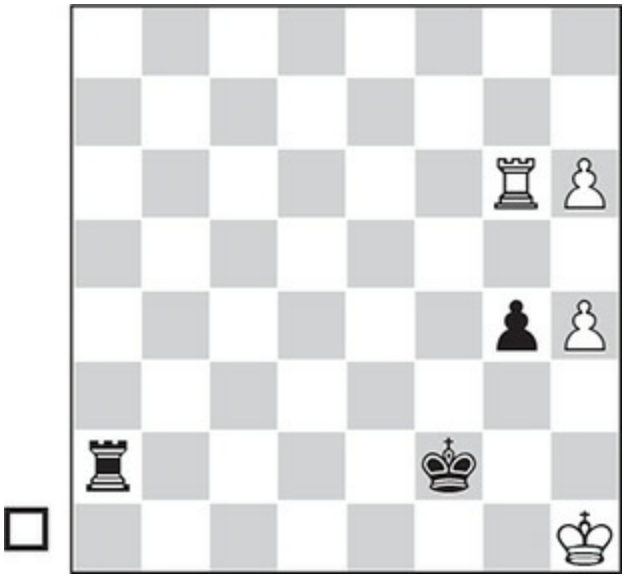
8...♔xf6 9.♖h6+ 1-0

A double attack decides the game once again.

Game 131 Level 2

Tigran Gorgiev

Study, 1929



White to play and win

White's advantage is his advanced h-pawn. Black's counterplay is associated with creating mating threats with his advanced king. White deals with this by using tactical ideas.

1.h7

The natural move 1.♖xg4? gives Black just enough time to survive: 1...♖a6 2.♔h2 ♔f3 3.♔h3 ♖xh6 4.♖g8 ♔f4 and Black draws because the couple of files cut off will not be relevant in the case of a rook pawn.

1...♖a3!

The best practical defence for Black.

2.♖f6+ ♔g3 3.♖a6!

A fantastic resource.

3...♖d3 4.♖a3!

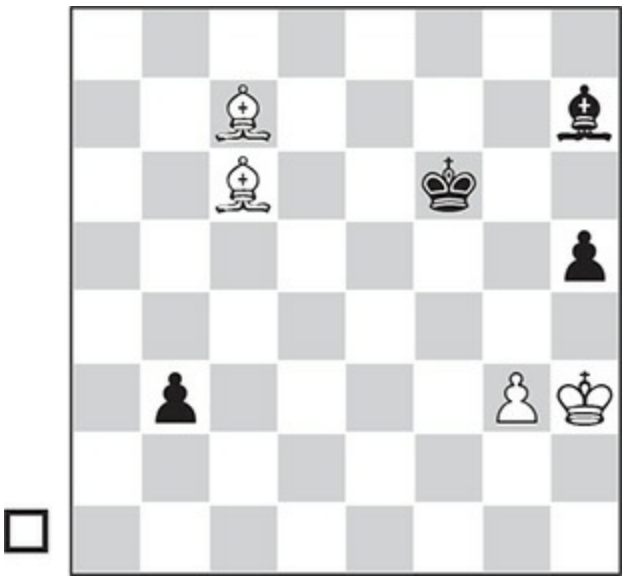
White keeps sacrificing his rook to draw his counterpart to the a-file from where he cannot deliver a mate, as the a1-square will be controlled by White's new queen.

4...♖xa3 5.h8♕ 1-0

Game 132 Level 2

Ernest Pogosyants

Study, 1961



White to play and win

White needs to take care of Black's b-pawn. Black plans to use it as a decoy to force the exchange of White's last remaining pawn on the board. White fights against this by using all possible resources, and surprisingly this includes checkmating ideas with no pawns remaining for him! The initial few moves seem simple:

1.♗a5 b2 2.♗c3+ ♔g5 3.♗xb2 ♗f5+

This is the best practical defence: Black wants to trade off the last pawns and reach a simple draw.

4.♔g2! h4

But this is Black's point: how does White avoid the exchange of his only remaining pawn? Does it mean that the game is steering towards a draw?

5.♗c1+ ♔h5

5...♔g4 6.♗f3#.

This is the most critical position in the study.

6.g4+!

A very pretty blocking sacrifice that wins Black's bishop or mates him.

6...♗xg4

6...♔xg4 7.♗f3#.

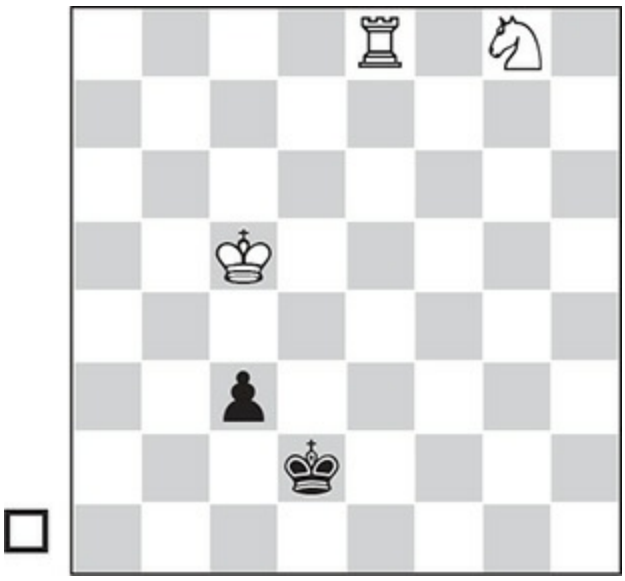
7.♗e8#

This study displayed simple yet beautiful mating patterns.

Game 133 Level 2

David Gurgenidze

Study, 1975



White to play and win

1.♘f6!

Initially, it does not look like a long shot to stop a passed pawn on the 6th rank with a knight and rook. However, the placement of the white king, blocking the c-file, makes the position very tricky, requiring accurate calculation and visualisation.

1...c2

Black's only hope to save himself.

2.♘e4+ ♔d3!

If Black's king moves anywhere else, White's knight will reach c3 with a tempo and then go to e2 to stop the c-pawn, for instance 2...♔d1 3.♘c3+ ♔d2 4.♘a2+-.

At this point, we do not need to find the win, but only to find moves that continue the fight one more move. There is no way to stop the pawn at this point, so all White should do is eliminate what cannot be done and continue with what can be done, even if that move does not lead us to our objective immediately.

3.♘f2+

This is the only option, because everything else does not work.

3...♔c3

Again, the only move, since we have eliminated the other options: 3...♔d2 4.♖d8+ ♔e2 5.♘d3+-.

4.♖e3+ ♔d2 5.♖d3+ ♔e2 6.♖c3 ♔d2 7.♘e4+ ♔d1

7...♔c1 8.♔d4 (8.♖h3 ♔b2 9.♖h2 ♔b3 10.♘d2+ ♔c3, and Black is in time to draw) 8...♔b2 9.♘c5!+-.

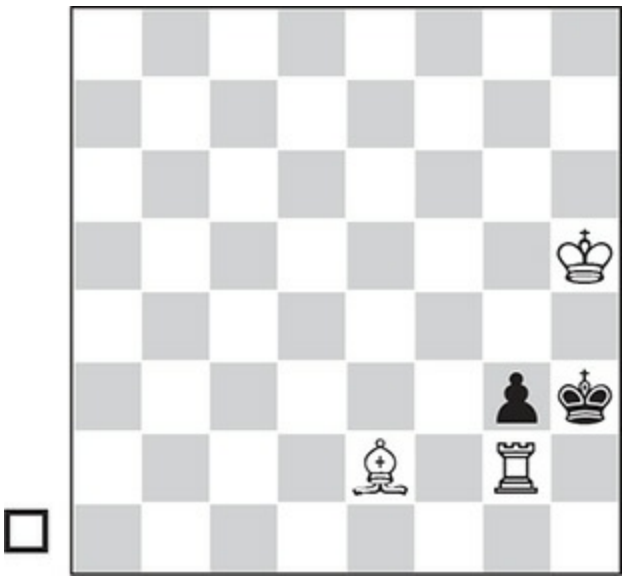
8.♖d3+ ♔e1 9.♖e3+! ♔d1 10.♘c3+ ♔d2 11.♔d4 c1♕ 12.♖e2#

A pretty mating idea is the final twist!

Game 134 Level 2

David Gurgenidze

Study, 1976



White to play and win

White has a huge material advantage. However, under these extreme circumstances, he has to step away from stalemate and still not lose his rook for the opponent's pawn.

1.♖g1 ♔h2 2.♖f1!

To meet 2...g2 by pinning the pawn on the second rank.

2...g2 3.♖f2

You can reach this point by the elimination of alternatives.

3...♔g1

3...♔g3 4.♖f3+ ♔h2 5.♗f1! wins as in the main line; 3...♔h1 4.♗f3+-.

4.♖f3 ♔h2 5.♗f1!

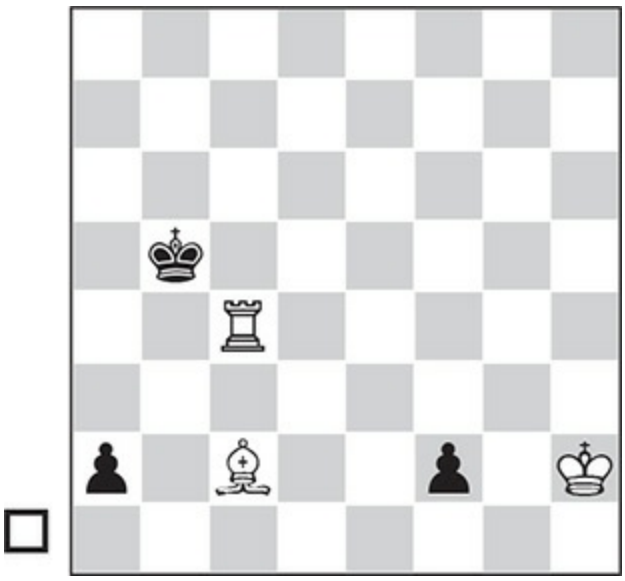
This is the fine idea that White had to visualise from the beginning. Finally, Black is allowed to promote his pawn, but in the process he is forced to run into a pretty mating idea.

5...g1♕ 6.♖h3#

Game 135 Level 2

David Gurgenidze

Study, 1977



White to play and win

This time, White's rook and bishop need to take care of two pawns on the seventh rank. So, by definition this is more complicated than the previous study.

White needs to take care of both the pawns by giving up his bishop to retain the minimum possible mating material.

There are a few domination and underpromotion themes that make this position quite lively.

1.♗d3

Using a discovered check as a threat to get the rook back to the first rank.

1...♔a5 2.♖c1 ♔b4 3.♖a1!

3.♗c4 f1♕ 4.♗xf1 ♔b3!, and Black is in time to draw!

3...♔b3

The critical test. The other alternatives lose in a straightforward manner:

A) 3...f1♕ 4.♗xf1 ♔b3 5.♗c4+!+-;

B) 3...♔c3 4.♖xa2 ♔xd3 5.♖xf2+-.

4.♗b1!!

This is the only way to stop Black from collecting White's rook for his a-passer.

4...f1♘+!

The best way to keep fighting. Other attempts lose directly:

A) 4...♔b2 5.♖xa2+ ♔xb1 6.♖xf2+-;

B) 4...f1♕ 5.♗xa2+ ♔b2 6.♖xf1+-.

5.♔h3!

Care is still paramount.

A) 5.♔g1? would throw away the win, as can be seen after 5...♘d2! (5...♔b2 6.♖xa2+ ♔xb1 7.♖e2 ♘g3 8.♖e5+-) 6.♗xa2+ (6.♖xa2 ♘xb1 and the black knight being in the vicinity of the king ensures a draw) 6...♔b2 7.♖d1 ♔c2!=; the king and knight dominate White's rook on the first rank!;

B) 5.♔g2 ♘e3+ 6.♔f3 axb1♕ 7.♖xb1+ ♔c2 and again, the knight joins the king and defends the position.

5...♔b2

5...♘d2 6.♗xa2+ ♔b2 7.♖d1+-.

6.♖xa2+ ♔xb1 7.♖e2

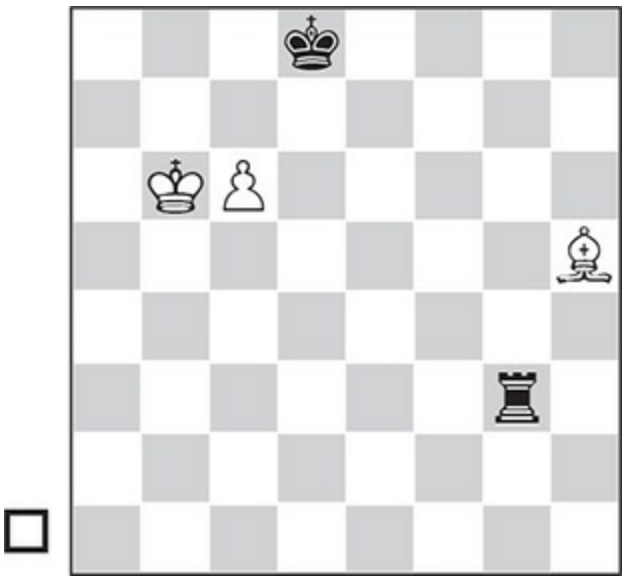
This traps the helpless knight on f1 and wins the game.

7...♔c1 8.♖e1+ 1-0

Game 136 Level 2

David Gurgenidze

Study, 1977



White to play and win

White's task in this position is to shepherd the pawn to a queen by dominating Black's rook with his bishop. Of course, there is a very important role for the king.

1.c7+ ♔d7 2.♗e8+!

It is important to force the king back to c8.

2...♔c8 3.♗f7 ♖e3 4.♗c4!

A highly accurate move. White retains the flexibility to check from both sides (e6 and a6), while at the same time keeping Black's rook from checking White's king.

The other tempting move 4.♗d5? does not work, due to 4...♖e8 5.♗b7+ ♔d7 6.♗c6+ ♔c8 7.♗d5 (7.♗xe8 stalemate is Black's defence) 7...♔d7=.

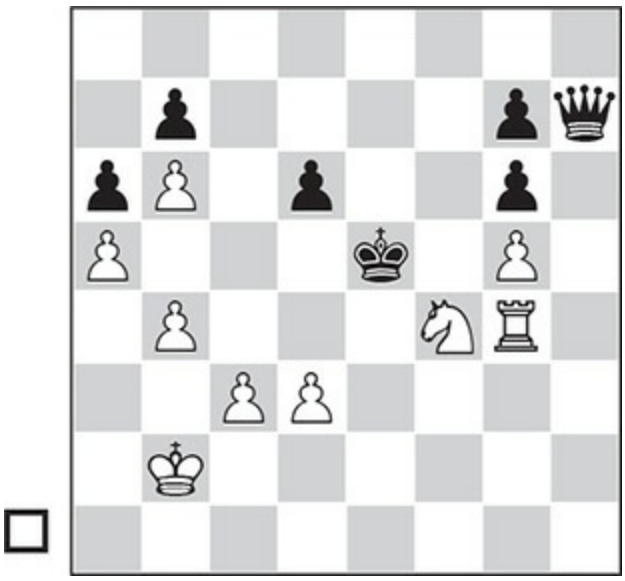
4...♖e8 5.♔c6! 1-0

This forces mate. Pure domination with limited material and a stunning finale! White found a line that forces mate no matter what in a mere 5 moves from the starting position, which is quite a feat!

Game 137 Level 2

David Gurgenidze

Study, 1979



White to play and win

Black's king position in the centre looks precarious, because he has only a few squares to go to. Also, Black's queen is badly placed in the corner and blocked by its own pawns. Since White cannot go for mate (with his material inferiority), he needs to use his tactical resources skilfully to dominate the opponent's queen with his rook and knight. Forks are a common theme when we have knights, and especially so when fighting against the mighty queen!

1.♖h4! ♕g8

1...♕xh4 2.♘xg6++-.

2.♖h8

Chasing the queen all the way!

2...♕f7 3.♖f8 ♕d7

3...♕xf8 4.♘xg6+.

4.♘xg6+ ♔e6

4...♔d5 5.♖f5+ ♔e6 (5...♔c6 6.♖c5+! dxc5 7.♘e5++-) 6.♘f8++-.

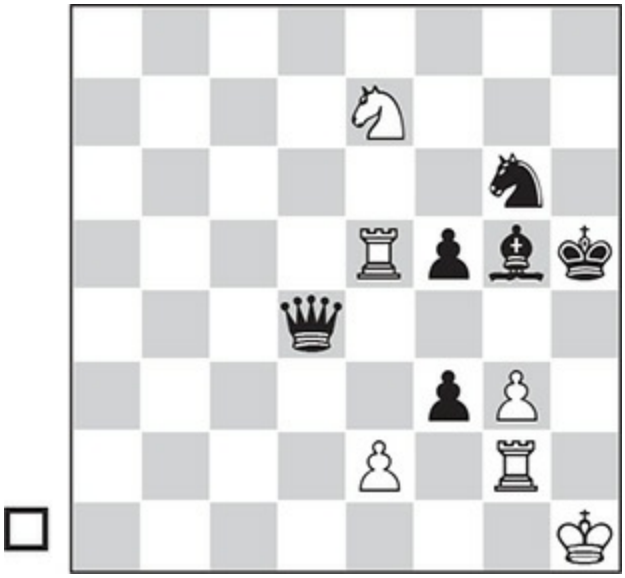
5.♖f6+ ♔d5 6.♖f5+ ♔c6 7.♖c5+!

This time, White's sacrifice cannot be declined.

7...dxc5 8.♘e5+ 1-0

White sacrificed his rook at various places of the board to ensure a knight fork. Black kept avoiding the sacrifice for quite a few moves, until he was forced to accept it, resulting in White winning the queen with a knight fork.

Game 138 Level 2
Vladimir Kovalenko
Study, 2007



White to play and win

White is down in material and also a few of his pieces are hanging. So, he has to look for tactical themes to win back some material.

1.g4+!

To block the g4-square from the black king's access.

1...fxg4 2.♖h2+ ♘h4 3.♖xh4+ ♔xh4 4.♘f5+

White has used a nice idea to win Black's queen. But things do not end here, as Black still remains with two dangerous passed pawns on the verge of promoting:

4...♔h3! 5.♘xd4 f2 6.♖f5 g3 7.♖f3 ♗e3!

7...f1♕+ 8.♖xf1 g2+ 9.♔g1 ♗e3+ 10.♖f2 ♗xd4 11.e3! ♗xe3 stalemate!

8.♖xg3+!

The alternative 8.♘f5? does not work due to 8...f1♕+ 9.♖xf1 g2#.

8...♔xg3 9.♘f5+ ♔f4 10.♘g3!

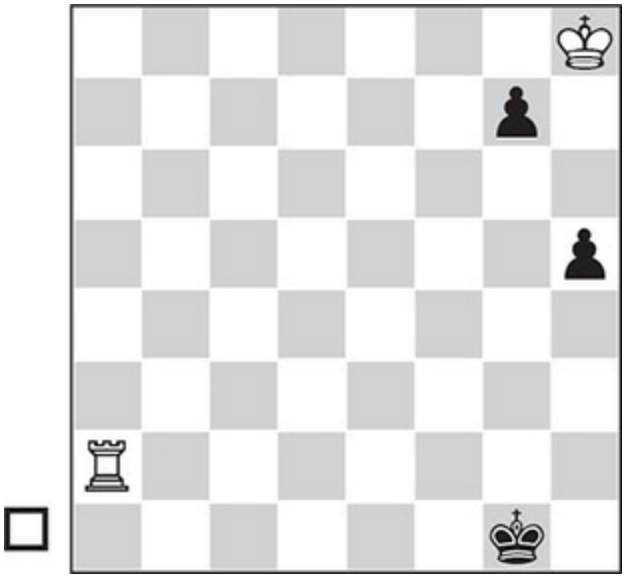
10.♘xe3? ♔xe3 11.♔g2 ♔xe2-+.

10...♔xg3 1-0

White used a knight fork to win Black's queen. Later, he was forced to

contend with another pawn on the seventh rank. He sacrificed most of his remaining material and made use of a stalemate trick to draw the game!

Game 139 Level 2
Jaroslav Moravec
Study, 1913



White to play and win

White needs his king to ultimately stop Black's passed h-pawn from collecting White's rook by threatening to promote. Although this is the ultimate goal, there are some fine nuances on the way. Besides, it looks that White is perhaps missing a tempo, especially considering that his king is on h8!

1.♔h7!!

An incredible move, the point of which becomes apparent only on the very last move of this given main line.

1.♔xg7? h4 2.♔g6 h3 3.♔g5 h2=, and White is way short in terms of tempos!

1...h4

1...g5 2.♔g6 g4 3.♔g5! (White keeps the h-pawn alive to prevent stalemating ideas; 3.♔xh5? g3 4.♔g4 g2 5.♔g3 ♔h1 6.♖xg2 stalemate;

3.♔f5 also wins) 3...g3 4.♔h4! g2 5.♔h3 ♔h1 6.♖xg2. Now Black loses because of his available pawn move!

2.♔g6 h3 3.♔g5 h2 4.♔g4 h1♕

4...h1♘ 5.♔f3 (usually in such endgames, Black loses with his knight on h1, and the presence of an extra pawn for Black does not change the assessment here) 5...g5 6.♖d2 (6.♖a4 ♔h2 7.♖g4 ♔h3 8.♖xg5 ♔h2 9.♖g7+-) 6...g4+ 7.♔xg4 ♘f2+ 8.♔f3 ♘h1 9.♖a2+- or 8...♘h3 9.♔g3+-.

5.♔g3! 1-0

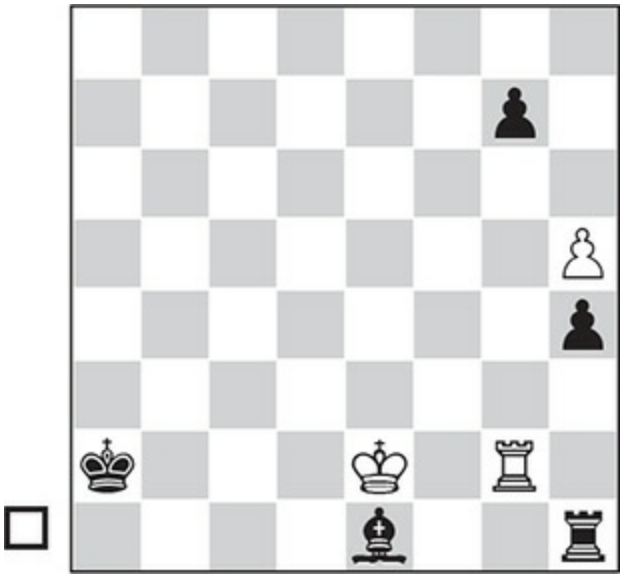
With mate on a1, or winning the queen. This is only possible because of the presence of Black's pawn on g7, which makes the otherwise working resource 5...♕h8 futile! It was interesting to observe the keen eye for detail when White refrained from taking Black's pawns while bringing back his king.

In my limited understanding, studies with multiple solutions are generally frowned upon among composers. They are not considered to be perfect. But from a training perspective, if the variations involved are creative, tough to find and interesting, and if they can challenge a player, I am fine with using them in my training. Anything to make the player think with intense effort!

Game 140 Level 3

Friedrich Amelung

Study, 1896



White to play and draw

1.h6!

The first solution, which is kind of obvious once the core idea is found. In many positions, the right idea or the path to be taken is not obvious at the beginning at all. We get attracted to an idea, spend time analysing it, hit a roadblock, try to overcome it, and give up on the whole idea. At this point, some players get dejected so much that they are unable to come up with alternative ideas that are worth analysing. They kind of freeze, and their mind goes blank.

To avoid this scenario, it makes sense to have identified interesting alternatives to our original idea before we embark on the analytical process. We can easily be affected by the outcome of our analysis, especially if it is not positive or to our liking.

We should not underestimate the role of emotions during our analytical process. Some of the most difficult situations during a game are:

1. When the opponent plays a good-looking move that we have completely missed while playing our previous move. Unexpected moves from the opponent can unsettle even seasoned players.

2. While executing our move, we realise we have made a mistake in our analysis and notice the refutation. But we have already half-executed the

move on the board!

3. The opponent plays a new opening variation in our game, which we completely did not expect, and coincidentally it is an opening variation where we have less experience and understanding, and plenty of doubts!

4. We have some doubts about our capabilities in certain areas of the game; for example, we do not like to come under a dangerous-looking attack, and that is precisely what happens against an opponent who is known for his attacking skills. Can you imagine a worse situation than this?!

5. An uncomfortable opponent, poor form, self-doubts, lack of time in a tough position on the board, etc.

6. You can book a room, sit alone, and imagine all kinds of worse situations and put yourself right in the middle of them...

A) 1.♖xg7 ♗c3;

B) 1.♔f3+!. I believe this is not the intended solution! If the player has found the other solution, the helper can suggest trying to make 1.♔f3! work for White: 1...♔b1 2.♖xg7! (White is threatening to advance his rook pawn, so it is logical to expect the bishop to come to the a1-h8 diagonal at some point; 2.♖b2+?? ♔xb2 3.♔g2 h3+ 4.♔xh1 ♗g3 5.h6 g5 6.h7 ♗e5-+) 2...♗c3 3.♖b7+ ♔c2 4.h6 ♖g1

analysis diagram

5.♖b5!! (it’s time for White to put his rook behind the passed pawn! 5.h7?? ♖g6!-+, followed by rook behind the passed pawn, and blah blah blah...) 5...♖g3+ 6.♔e4 ♔d2 7.♖h5 h3 8.♔f4 ♖e3 9.♔g4=, assuming White knows how to draw with a rook against rook and bishop!

One advantage of being a coach is that you have the liberty to expect your students to know these minor technicalities, even if you do not know them yourself.

1...gxh6

Already, one would have guessed where the future is going!

1...g5 2.h7 ♗c3 3.♖xg5 h3 4.♔f3 (4.♖g8?? h2-+) 4...h2 (4...♖f1+ 5.♔e4 (5.♔e2 h2-+; White does not have 6.♖g2 check here) 5...h2 6.♖g2+=) 5.♖h5=.

2.♔f3+

Step 1: open the gate.

2...♔b1 3.♖b2+!!

Step 2: let the horse out.

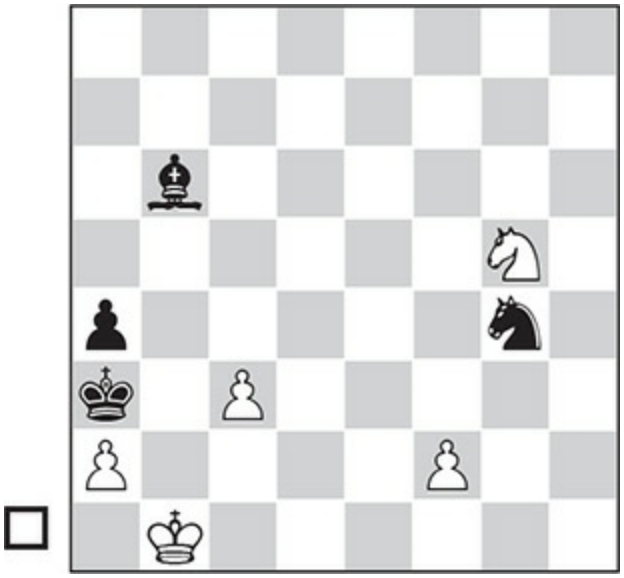
3...♔xb2 4.♔g2 ½-½

Step 3: trap a new elephant in the cage! As usual, the engines give this position as completely winning for Black without tablebases.

Game 141 Level 3

Alexey Troitzky

Study, source and date unknown



White to play and win

Despite being short of a minor piece, there is something working in White's favour. Once you find it, go all out to exploit it!

1.♘f3!

From here, the knight has multiple routes to give a check to Black's king: via e1, d2, e5 or d4, depending upon how Black reacts.

1.♘e4? (this is the problem we saw under point 15 in Chapter 2. White wants to deliver checkmate with his knight and is embarking on a journey that looks similar to 1.♘f3 and likely to lead to the same conclusion. However, White is compromising here by not spending time to understand if it makes any difference to implement the same idea with 1.♘f3) 1...♗a5!-+ (a 2040 USCF player missed this completely; 1...♗c7? 2.♘d2 ♘e5 3.♔a1+- was the solution provided by the student, missing the resource 1...♗a5).

1...♗xf2

Preventing 2.♘e1 and keeping control of the d4-square.

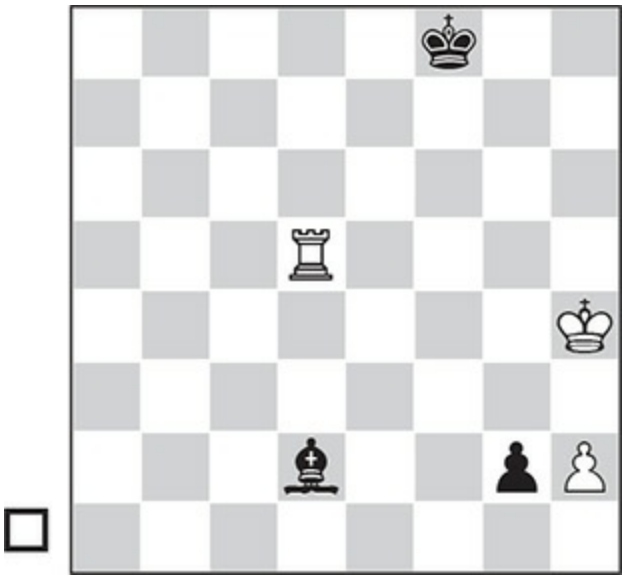
1...♗a5 2.♘d4 – this is the difference. From c2, the knight controls the b4-square as well, which did not happen with 1.♘e4. A good chess player should be curious about such apparently minor details that make a major difference in the outcome of our analysis.

2.♔a1!

The key move to solve this study. Black's pieces are well placed to meet

White's threats, but they have to make a costly compromise and allow White's knight access to one of the key squares e1/d2/d4/e5, with mate on the next move. In other words, Black is in zugzwang now.
2.♘d2? (threatening 3.♘c4 and also 3.♔a1 followed by 4.♘b1) 2...♘e3! (2...♘e5? 3.♔a1, followed by 4.♘b1 mate) 3.♔a1 ♘c2+, and Black just about escapes with a draw.
2...♘e3
Threatening 3...♘c2 check.
2...♗e3 3.♘e1; 2...♗e1 3.♘xe1 ♘e3 4.♔b1.
3.♘d4! 1-0

Game 142 Level 3
Alexey Troitzky
Study, 1895



White to play and draw

At first look, it appears that the g2-pawn cannot be stopped, and there is not much counterplay for White against this deadly threat. However, White can play for a draw due to a concept that is very common in studies but not as common in practical games:
1.♖f5+!

1.♖d8+? ♔f7 2.♖d7+ ♔f6 3.♖d6+ ♔f5 4.♖d5+ ♔e4 5.♖g5 ♗xg5+ 6.♔h3 g1♘+!-+. If Black knows how to checkmate with a bishop and knight, this is a won position for Black!

1...♔e7

1...♔g7 2.♔h3! (2.♖f3! is another path to the same destination: 2...♗e1+ 3.♔h3 g1♕ 4.♖f7+! ♔g8 5.♖f8+, White's rook keeps giving check from the side, and White makes a draw due to a stalemate trick) 2...g1♕ 3.♖g5+! and either capture by Black is an immediate draw by stalemate.

2.♖e5+!

The white rook should reach the e-file before sacrificing itself.

2...♔f6 3.♖e1!

Luring the bishop closer to the white king's reach.

3...♗xe1+ 4.♔h3 g1♘+!?

4...g1♕=.

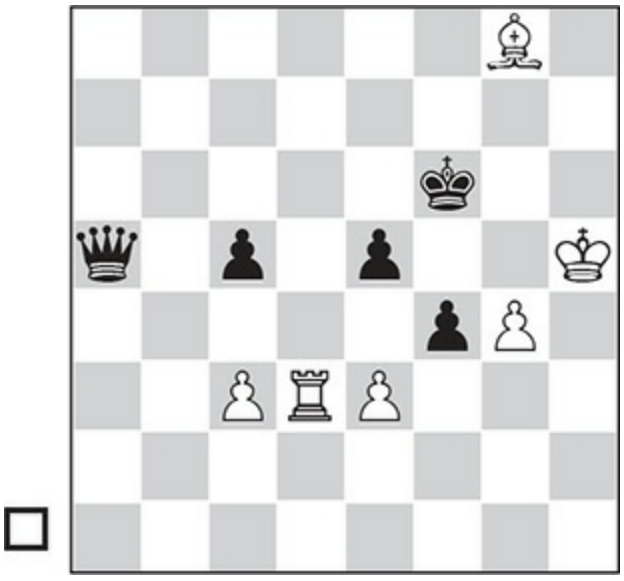
5.♔g2 ♘e2 6.♔f1 ½-½

A nice fork towards the very end earns the draw for White.

Game 143 Level 3

Alexey Troitzky

Study, 1896



White to play and win

The key features of this position are the placement of Black's king, which can come under an attack, and the odd placement of Black's queen.

1.♖d7

Threatening 2.♖f7 check, followed by a discovered attack on Black's queen, forcing Black to hide his queen behind the pawns.

1.g5+? ♔e7-+.

1...♕xc3

A) 1...e4? leads to immediate mate: 2.g5+ ♔e5 3.♖d5#;

B) 1...fxe3? 2.♖f7+ ♔e6 3.♖a7+ was the threat behind White's first move. Now the rook on f7 cannot attack the queen with discovered check, but...

2.g5+

A) 2.♗d5? (threatening 3.♖f7 checkmate) 2...e4!-+;

B) 2.♖f7+? ♔e6 and White has no serious threats at this point.

2...♔f5 3.♖d3!!

The critical move of the whole study, gaining a crucial tempo. This also sets up a mating net around Black's king, as we shall see soon.

A) 3.e4+? wins the queen, but nothing more: 3...♔xe4 4.♗h7+ (4.♗d5+? ♔d4-+) 4...♔e3 5.♖d3+ ♕xd3 6.♗xd3 ♔xd3 7.g6 f3! 8.g7 f2 9.g8♕ f1♕ 10.♕d5+ ♔c3 11.♕xc5+ is good enough only for a draw;

B) 3.♗d5? e4-+, clearing the e5-square for the black king;

C) 3.♗h7+? ♔e6, and the king escapes.

We have to try to make all the interesting moves work in our favour. While trying such alternatives, we can eliminate most of them quite easily, thereby narrowing our options. This is one good way to find the correct move in most positions.

3...♕xd3

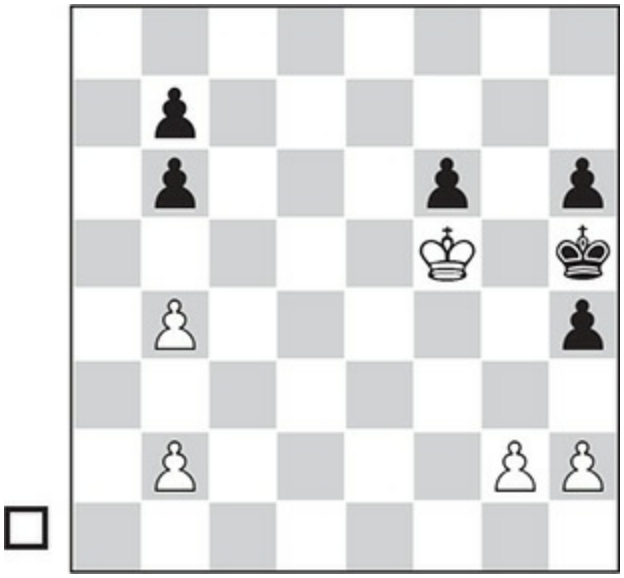
3...♕a5 4.e4+! (4.♗h7+ ♔e6) 4...♔xe4 5.♗h7#. A fantastic checkmate right in the middle of the board.

4.♗h7+ 1-0

Game 144 Level 3

Moritz Lewitt

Study, 1896



White to play and win

The critical aspect in this position is Black's king placement. Can White do something about it? One interesting point to note is that Black's moves are more or less forced in most of the variations. White will have to always choose between the options before him. Such positions can be used to train on the candidate moves concept with upcoming players.

1.b5

Such moves should be given priority in our calculations, as they force Black to play only moves that are easy to take to their logical conclusion quickly.

A) 1.g3? hxg3 2.hxg3 b5=;

B) 1.h3!? leads to a forcing long variation, but it is not too difficult to calculate, as the moves for both sides are pretty straightforward. Upcoming players should use such opportunities to improve their visualisation skills by calculating them to the end. Subsequently, they can try calculating long variations where they will have to find some tough moves too: 1...b5 2.♔xf6 b6 3.♔e6 ♔g6 4.♔d5 ♔f5 (both kings are going after the queenside and kingside pawns, respectively. Eventually it will in a pawn race in which Black holds his ground) 5.♔c6 ♔f4 6.♔xb6 ♔g3 7.♔xb5 ♔xg2 8.♔c5 ♔xh3 9.b5 ♔g2 10.b6 h3 11.b7 h2 12.b8♕ h1♕ 13.♕a8+ ♔g1 14.♕xh1+ ♔xh1 15.b4 h5 16.b5 h4 17.b6 h3 18.b7 h2 19.b8♕ ♔g1 and we reach a

well-known theoretically drawn position;

C) 1.b3? b5.

1...h3 2.g4+

2.gxh3!? ♔h4 3.♔xf6 ♔xh3 4.♔g6 ♔xh2 5.♔xh6 ♔g3 (both kings are now rushing to the other side to do the same as they did on the kingside) 6.♔g5 ♔f3 7.♔f5 ♔e3 8.♔e5 ♔d3 9.♔d5 (9.♔d6 ♔c4) 9...♔c2 10.♔d6 ♔b3!= (10...♔xb2?? 11.♔c7 ♔c3 12.♔xb7 (12.♔xb6 ♔b4=; I wouldn't be surprised if many upcoming players fell into this trap and came to the incorrect conclusion that Black draws even with 10...♔xb2) 12...♔c4 13.♔xb6+-) 11.♔c7 ♔b4 12.♔xb6 ♔c4 13.b3+ (13.♔a5 ♔b3= 14.b6 ♔c4) 13...♔b4!=. A picturesque final position!

This is a very important detail that should not be missed. If the player did not see this variation and solved the main line, the helper can ask him to calculate 2.gxh3 to its end. Basically, the helper should encourage the player to calculate as many variations as possible, not just the main lines, while training at home. As I have mentioned repeatedly, training should be harder than the actual battle. The training we do should build our capabilities, empowering us to handle the tough situations that inevitably every player will have to face time and again in their games. While training at home, for at least one hour per day, we should use maximum energy, effort and concentration to build our capabilities and accustom ourselves to a stage of such intense concentration, effort, energy and alertness levels regularly. It should become a part of our system that can be brought out when required during a game.

2...♔h4

3.b3!

Following the simple logic in such endgames to keep as many pawn moves in reserve as possible, which can be put to good use subsequently. As we can see here, we should make use of logic, common sense, and apply chess principles along with brutal calculations. This is where our understanding of the game and evaluation skills also come to the fore.

3.♕f4? (3.g5 fxg5-+) 3...h5 and now:

A) 4.gxh5 ♕xh5 5.♕g3 ♕g5 6.♕xh3 ♕f5 7.♕g2 (7.♕g3 ♕e4 8.h4 f5 9.h5 ♕e3 10.h6 f4+ 11.♕h2 f3 12.h7 f2 13.♕g2 ♕e2) 7...♕g4 8.h3+ ♕f4=;

B) 4.g5 f5! (while solving the initial position, a player has to foresee such critical moments in the analysis. The more we see, the better it reflects our capabilities, alertness and concentration; 4...fxg5+?? 5.♕f3+-) 5.♕f3??. White should agree to a stalemate, but if he tries for more like this, he simply loses after 5...♕xg5.

3...h5 4.g5!

4.gxh5? throws away the advantage: 4...♕xh5 5.♕f4 ♕h4 6.b4 ♕h5 7.♕g3 ♕g5 8.♕xh3 (the logic behind going into this variation is that in most endgames, having an outside passed pawn is a distinct advantage) 8...♕f4 9.♕g2 f5 (here, it does not yield White the win, as Black's king is too active and White's outside pawn is not able to advance at all) 10.♕f2 ♕e4!

(10...♔g4?? goes to the wrong side: 11.♔e3+- and Black does not have 11...♔g3) 11.h3 (11.h4?? ♔f4-+; 11.♔g3?? ♔e3-+ is the point of 10...♔e4!) 11...♔f4 12.♔g2 ♔e3 13.h4 ♔e2 14.♔g3 ♔e3 15.♔g2=. Here, we see the danger of applying logic, common sense, and chess principles while calculating long variations! Sometimes, brutal concrete variations triumph over this trio. At other times, it can work the other way too.

4...fxg5 5.b4

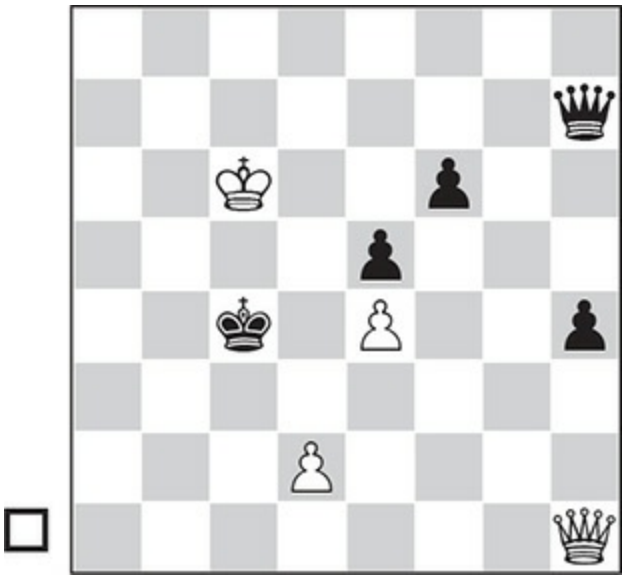
The reserve pawn move we saved earlier on the third move comes to our aid here.

5...g4 6.♔f4 g3 7.hxg3#

Game 145 Level 3

Henri Rinck

Study, 1906



White to play and win

1.♕b1!

1.♕f3? ♔b4, and Black escapes.

1...♔d4

1...h3? lets White execute his idea, a very cooperative attitude: 2.♕b5+ ♔d4 3.♕d5#.

2.♕b3!

In some positions, we have to find some tough moves to achieve our objectives. These tough moves could come at the beginning of the variation, in the middle, or right at the end of the variation. We need to maintain a good alertness level so as not to miss the bus. This is one such moment for White.

A) 2.♕g1+? ♔d3 3.♕e3+ ♔c2=;

B) 2.♔d6?? ♕h6-+.

2...♕xe4+ 3.♔d6

Wherever the queen moves, Black will have to face the consequences.

3...♕a8

3...♕g2 4.♕c3+ ♔e4 5.♕c6++-.

4.♕e3+

Guiding the black king to the danger zone.

4...♔c4 5.♕c3+ ♔b5 6.♕b3+ ♔a6 7.♕a4+ ♔b7 8.♕b5+ ♔a7

8...♔c8 9.♕d7+ ♔b8 10.♕c7#.

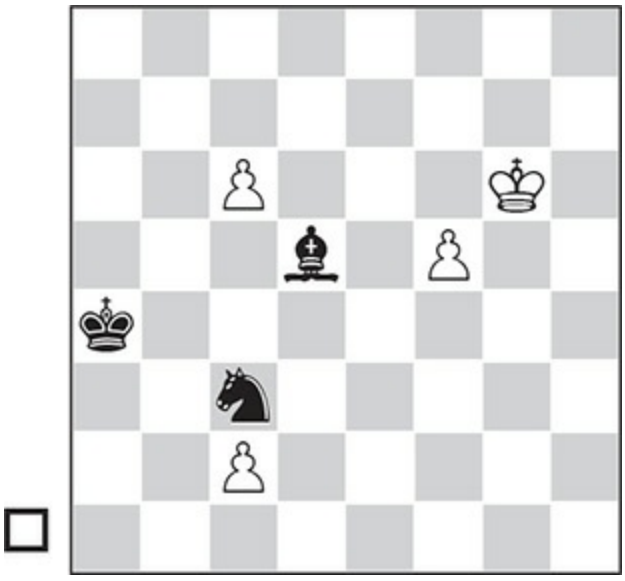
9.♔c7 1-0

Finally, the king does the honours.

Game 146 Level 3

Vasily Platov

Study, 1906



White to play and win

Despite being two minor pieces down, White can create more problems with his two advanced pawns than Black can solve.

1.c7 ♗e6!?

The best practical defence for Black; 1...♗b7 2.f6 ♘d5 3.f7+-.

2.fxe6

2.f6? ♘d5 3.c8♕ (3.f7 ♗xf7+ 4.♔xf7 ♘xc7=) 3...♗xc8 4.f7 ♘f4+ 5.♔f6 ♘e6 stops the pawn on time: 6.♔e7=.

2...♘d5

The knight is a tricky piece, under-estimate it at your peril!

3.c8♘!

It remains to be seen if Black can achieve the two main objectives to save the game: sacrifice his knight for the central passed pawn and capture the c-pawn. How effectively White handles these two threats, will determine if he wins the game.

3.c8♕? ♘e7+.

3...♘f4+

3...♔b4 4.♔f5 ♔c3 5.♔e5 (White is unable to save the c-pawn, but he is attempting to promote his central pawn without allowing the black knight to interrupt) 5...♘c7 6.e7 ♔xc2 7.♘b6 (there are other ways to win as well. Black's king is too far away, and White is able to drive the black knight away from the pawns' vicinity) 7...♔d3 8.♘d5 ♘e8 9.♘f6 ♘g7 10.♘h5 ♘e8 11.♔e6 ♘c7+ 12.♔d7 ♘d5 13.e8♕+-.

4.♔f7 ♘xe6

It appears Black is close to achieving his objectives, but the next two moves by White will shatter all his hopes.

4...♘d5 5.♘b6+ ♘xb6 6.e7 ♘c8 7.e8♕+ promotes with check!

5.♘b6+!

5.♔xe6? ♔b4!=.

5...♔b4

If 5...♔b5 6.♔xe6 ♔xb6 7.♔d5 wins.

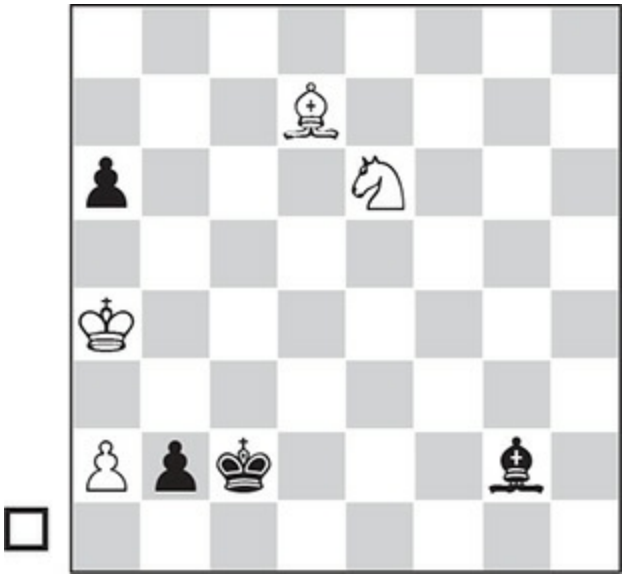
6.♘d5+! ♔c4 7.♔xe6 1-0

The c2-pawn, which apparently had no role earlier and remained a mute spectator, actually ensures that White wins in the final position. Sometimes doing nothing is better than doing something bad!

Game 147 Level 3

Leonid Kubbel

Study, 1910



White to play and draw

The b2-pawn is far advanced, and at first sight it appears that White can do nothing about it.

1.♘d4+

1.♘c5? loses to the spectacular 1...♗e4!.

1...♔d3 2.♗f5+

A) 2.♘e2 ♗e4 (2...♔xe2 3.♗f5 ♔d2 4.♔b3 ♔c1);

B) 2.♘b3 ♗e4 3.♘c5+ ♔d4;

C) 2.♘b5 axb5+ 3.♔a3 ♔c2 4.♗f5+ ♔c1 5.♔b4 ♗h3 6.♗g6 ♗d7.

2...♗e4 3.♗xe4+ ♔xe4

It appears that nothing can stop the b-pawn now, but White still has some tricks left up his sleeve.

4.♘b5!!

It's very easy to miss this brilliant idea (4.♘b3 ♔e3). White uses two factors to his advantage: a small window of opportunity to give a fork on c3 and...

4...axb5+ 5.♔a3! b1♕ ½-½

The cornered king position gives stalemate possibilities!

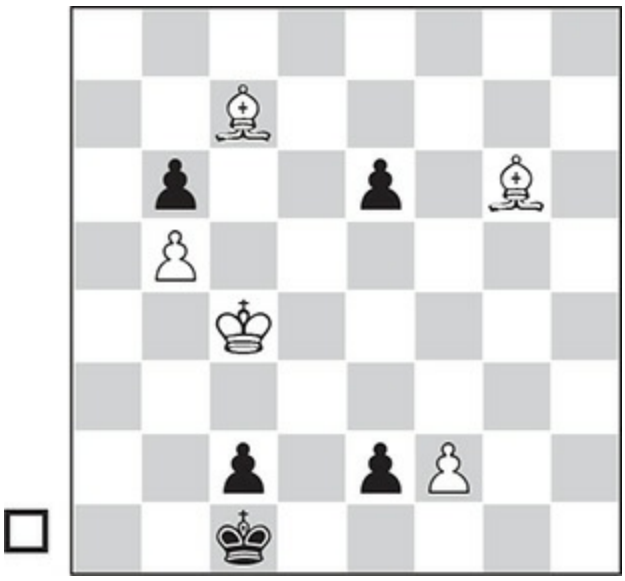
A) 5...b1♘+ 6.♔b4= as soon the sole pawn survivor in Black's camp will fall as well;

B) 5...b1♗ 6.♔b4 ♗d3 7.a4=.

Game 148 Level 3

Leonid Kubbel

Study, 1924



White to play and win

This is a slightly tougher position and will require 20 to 30 minutes of thought, at least for many, without any guarantee that the solution will be found by those who have not worked much on their calculation skills.

1.♔b3!

1.♗f4+? ♔b2! 2.♗e5+ ♔a2-+.

1...e1♕

A) 1...e5 2.♗xc2! e1♕ 3.♗xb6! and there is no good way to stop ♗e3 check on the next move: 3...♔d2 4.♗a5++-, exploiting the drawback of 3...♔d2;

B) 1...♔b1 2.♗xc2++-.

2.♗f4+ ♔b1

2...♔d1 3.♗h5+!+-.

3.♗xc2+ ♔a1

It should not be too difficult for players at this level to come to this point, but the following move will take some effort. Finding the move and realising its strength require a good effort or a good understanding of the position and what is going on behind the scenes. It would not surprise me if many players reject this whole variation at this point, as there is no direct way to force checkmate or gain substantial material.

When we are able to determine that some variations are completely not working, it makes sense to focus on moves that also do not seem to work, but not to the complete extent as to reject them outright. Many times, we reject moves without a valid reason or for an incorrect reason, due to some mistake in our analysis.

4.♗d6!

A) With 4.♗e3? e5 5.♗xb6 White is taking too much liberty to try to come to the critical a1-h8 diagonal. It's no surprise it does not work as well as expected: 5...♕e2 6.♗a5 ♕xb5+-+;

B) 4.f3? e5-+.

In the position after the text move, White plays to dominate the queen with his bishop pair and ultimately mate Black's helpless king on a1. There is a battle in which the dark-squared bishop tries to come to the right diagonal and give a checkmate, and Black tries to counter it. We can already see that a few of the pieces have already reached their optimum position and cannot

move further. So, it is a battle between the limited forces that still have options to move about. A few of the threats are ♗d6-b4-♗c3#, ♗d6-a3-♗b2#...

4...♕e2

4...e5 5.♗a3+-, exploiting the drawback of 4...e5, as the square is not available for the queen anymore to prevent 6.♗b2# next.

5.♗b4 ♕xb5

Now the black queen cannot move (other than to d5 with check), as it allows 6.♗c3 checkmate.

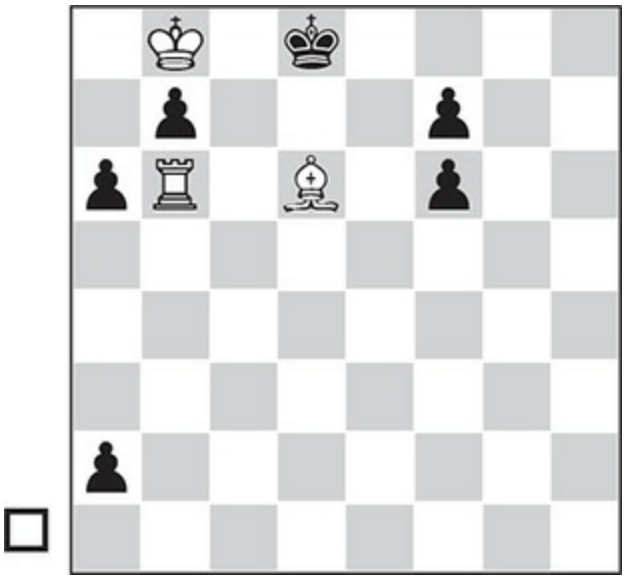
6.♗e4! e5 7.f3! 1-0

A brilliant zugzwang. Black has to move his queen and allow 8.♗c3 checkmate. A minor point to note is that there is no stalemate, since the black b-pawn can still move.

Game 149 Level 3

Leonid Kubbel

Study, 1924



White to play and win

Since White cannot stop the rook pawn from promoting, he needs to focus on weaving a mating web around Black's king:

1.♗c5!

Many players at this level will struggle to find the first move, since its justification will be known only if the whole concept works.

A) 1.♗e5? fxe5 2.♖d6+ ♔e7 3.♖d1 (White's rook manages to stop one pawn, but in the process has laid the foundation for the forward march of the rest of Black's pawns) 3...e4 4.♖a1 f5 5.♖xa2 b5-+ (5...f4 6.♖a4=);

B) 1.♗c7+? ♔e8-+;

C) 1.♗b4? a1♕ 2.♖d6+ ♔e8 3.♔c8 ♕c1+-+. This move comes with a check, due to the position of the bishop.

1...a1♕ 2.♖d6+ ♔e8

2...♔e7? 3.♖xa6++-.

3.♔c8!

A quiet move that threatens mate in one. A minor point to note is that 3...♕c1 does not come with a check here, as in the case of 1.♗b4.

3...♕a5

The only move. One clue to find out if we are analysing in the right direction is that the opponent's move will be forced in many places. That should motivate us to push forward with more energy.

4.♖d5!

A nice zugzwang with so many pieces on the board.

4...b5

The only available move for Black!

A) 4...f5 5.♖e5#;

B) 4...♕xc5+ 5.♖xc5 b6 (5...b5 6.♔b7) 6.♖c6 b5 7.♔c7 ♔e7 8.♔b6 and White's rook and king will combine well to stop all the pawns.

5.♖d3! 1-0

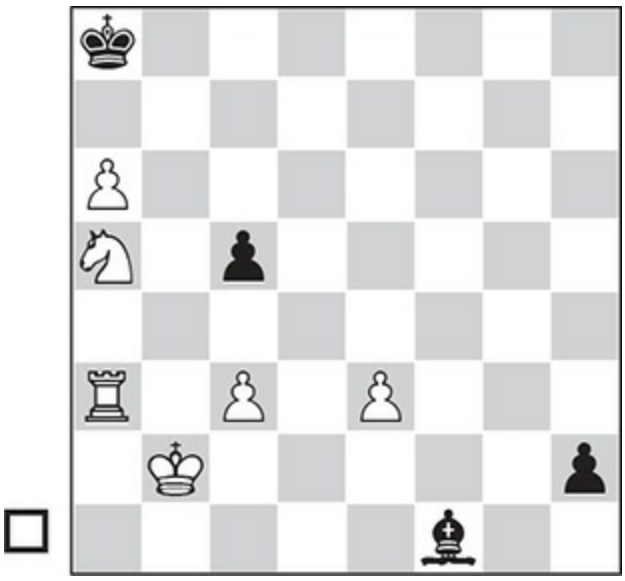
An incredible picture of domination. Black cannot stop mate.

5.♖d4? f5 6.♗b4 ♕b6 7.♖d6 ♕xd6-+; 5.♖h5? ♕d8+-+.

Game 150 Level 3

Leonid Kubbel

Study, 1924



White to play and draw

1.♘c4! ♗xc4

1...♔a7 2.♘d6! h1♕ 3.♘c8+ ♔a8 (3...♔b8? 4.a7++-) 4.♘b6+ ♔a7 5.♘c8+=.

2.♖a1 ♗d5 3.e4!

Luring the bishop away from the b3-square, so White's king gains quicker access to Black's c5-pawn.

A) 3.♔a3? ♔a7!-+ (3...h1♕? is too hasty and allows White to do what he wants to do: 4.♖xh1 ♗xh1 5.♔a4 (5.c4 ♔a7) 5...♗c6+ 6.♔a5 ♔a7 7.e4=);

B) 3.c4? h1♕ 4.♖xh1 ♗xh1 5.♔c3 ♗e4 6.♔b3 ♔a7 7.♔a4 ♔xa6-+.

3...♗xe4 4.♔b3

White wants to give up his rook for the h-pawn and win Black's c-pawn with his king. When Black tries to defend the c-pawn with his king, White's rook pawn can be used to lure the king away.

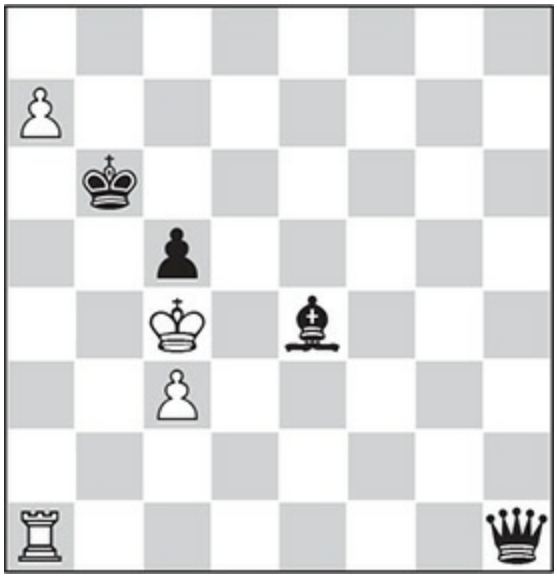
4...♔a7

4...♗d5+ 5.♔a4 (5.c4 h1♕ 6.♖xh1 ♗xh1 7.♔a4 ♗c6+ 8.♔a5 ♔a7= stalemate!) 5...♗c6+ 6.♔b3=.

5.♔c4 ♔b6 6.a7

6.♖b1+ ♗xb1.

6...h1♕



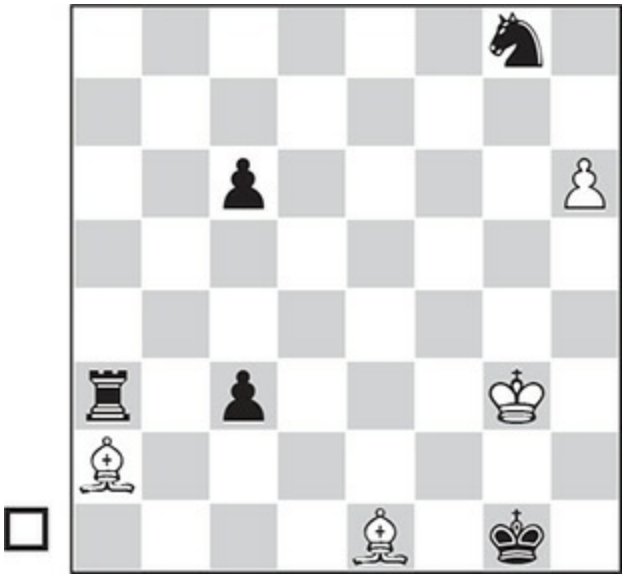
7.a8♕! ♗xa8 8.♖b1+!! ½-½

A brilliant stalemating idea.

Game 151 Level 3

Leonid Kubbel

Study, 1925



White to play and draw

1.♗f2+

1.h7? does not work, due to 1...c2+ 2.♔h4 ♘f6 3.h8♕ c1♕-+.

1...♔h1 2.h7

A) 2.♗d5+? (going in the right direction, but not paying attention to the move order. Implementing the correct idea with the correct move order is more important than implementing the correct idea in the manner it comes into our mind) 2...cxd5 3.h7 (3.♗c5? ♖a8 4.h7 ♘f6-+) 3...c2+ 4.♗e3 ♖xe3+ 5.♔f2 ♘h6! (5...♖e6 6.h8♕ ++-) 6.h8♕ ♖e2+ 7.♔xe2 c1♕-+;

B) Neither does 2.♗c5 ♖xa2 3.h7 ♖h2 4.hxg8♕ ♖g2+-+ work.

2...c2+ 3.♗e3!

None of the alternatives work: 3.♗b3? ♖xb3+ 4.♗e3 ♖xe3+ 5.♔f2 ♖h3 6.hxg8♕ ♖h2+, preventing ♕g2. 7.♔f3 c1♕-+; 3.♔f4? c1♕+-+; 3.♔h4? c1♕ 4.hxg8♕ ♕f4+-+.

3...♖xe3+

3...♘h6 doesn't give Black his win: 4.h8♕ ♖xe3+ 5.♔f2=.

4.♔f2

4.♔h4? c1♕ 5.hxg8♕ ♕e1+-+;

4.♔f4? c1♕ 5.h8♕+ ♖h3+-+.

4...♖h3

4...♖f3+ 5.♔xf3 c1♕ 6.hxg8♕=.

5.♗d5+!!

This is the brilliant point, and also incredible timing. 5.hxg8♕? ♖h2+ 6.♔f3

c1♕ 7.♗d5 ♕d1+! (this is the important difference compared to the main line) 8.♔e3+ cxd5-+.

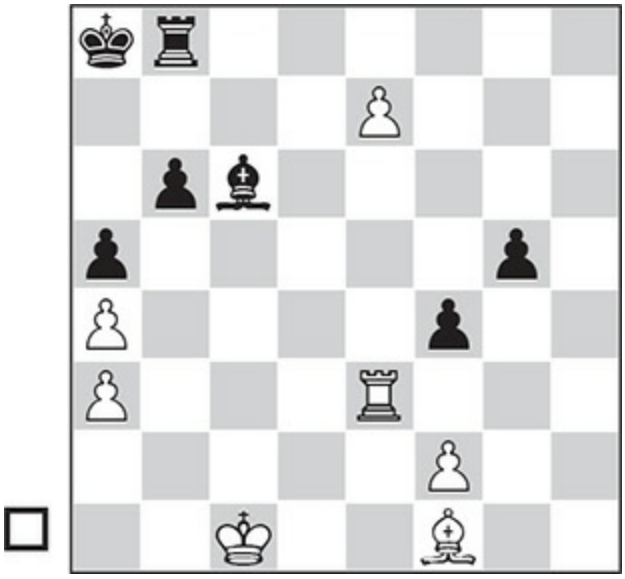
5...cxd5 6.hxg8♕ ♖h2+ 7.♔f3 c1♕ 8.♕g2+! ♖xg2 ½-½

Stalemate! Bringing the black pawn to d5 was very important for this stalemating idea.

Game 152 Level 3

Leonid Kubbel

Study, 1926



White to play and win

1.e8♕!

This is a relatively simple option.

A) 1.♗g2? does not work because of 1...♗xg2 (1...fxe3? 2.♗xc6+ ♔a7 3.fxe3+-) 2.e8♕ fxe3 3.♕xe3 (3.♕b5 ♔a7 4.♕xg5 ♖c8+ 5.♔b2 exf2 6.♕xg2 ♖c5, this is a fortress) 3...♖c8+ 4.♔b2 ♖c5 5.f3 ♗f1 (5...♗h3 6.f4) 6.f4 gxf4 7.♕f3+ ♔a7 8.♕xf1 ♔b7 with a fortress;

B) 1.♖c3! is another option that works, but perhaps slightly more complex: 1...♗xa4 (1...♗b7 2.♗b5+-; 1...♗e8 2.♖c7 g4 3.♗d3+-) 2.♗g2+ ♔a7 3.♖c7+ ♔a6

analysis diagram

B1) 4.♗f1+? b5 5.♖d7 ♖e8 6.♗d3 g4! (6...♔b6? 7.♗g6 ♖c8+ 8.♔d2 b4 9.e8♕ ♖xe8 10.♗xe8 ♗xd7 11.♗xd7; Black is unable to exchange the kingside pawns and so is lost) 7.♗g6 ♖c8+ 8.♔d2 b4! 9.e8♕ ♖xe8 10.♗xe8 ♗xd7 11.♗xd7 g3=;

B2) 4.♗h3! ♗e8 5.♗c8+! (5.♖d7? ♖b7!; 5.a4? b5! 6.♖d7 ♔b6 7.♖d8 ♔c7=) 5...♔b5 6.♔b2! (Black's king is cut off along the c-file and can come under a mating attack. If we look carefully, we can see that Black's pieces are not able to do much either) 6...f3 7.♔b3 ♗f7+ 8.♔c3 ♔a4 (8...♗e8 9.♗e6 ♔a6 10.♔c4+-, threatening 11.♗c8+) 9.♔b2 ♔b5 10.♗d7+ ♔a6 11.a4!+-. An incredible dance in achieving coordination and cornering Black's king.

1...♖xe8

1...♗xe8 2.♗g2+ ♔a7 3.♖e7+ ♔a6 4.♗f1+ b5 5.♖xe8!+-.

2.♗g2! ♖c8

2...fxe3 3.♗xc6+ ♔b8 4.♗xe8 exf2 5.♗b5; three pawns are no match for the piece here. White wins since he has the correct bishop colour.

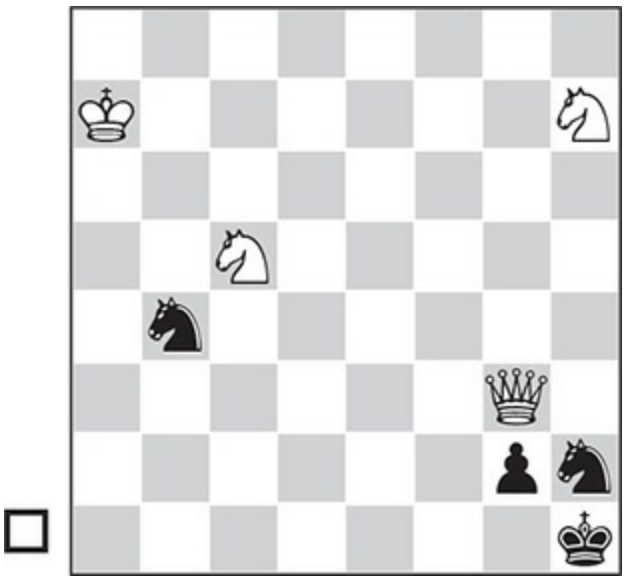
3.♖e8! 1-0

A cute tactic! 3...♖xe8 4.♗xc6+ ♔b8 5.♗xe8+-; 3...♗xg2+ 4.♖xc8+ ♔b7 5.♖g8 ♗c6 6.♖xg5 ♗xa4 7.♖f5+-.

Game 153 Level 3

Abram Gurvich

Study, 1927



White to play and win

Despite White having an extra queen, Black's pawn on the g-file is very advanced. White has to find a clever idea to win this position.

1.♘e4! ♘d3

1...g1♕+ 2.♘f2++-.

2.♕f2!!

2.♕xd3? g1♕+=.

2...♘xf2 3.♘g3+! ♔g1 4.♘g5!

A picturesque zugzwang! White mates on either h3 or f3, whatever Black does.

4...♘hg4

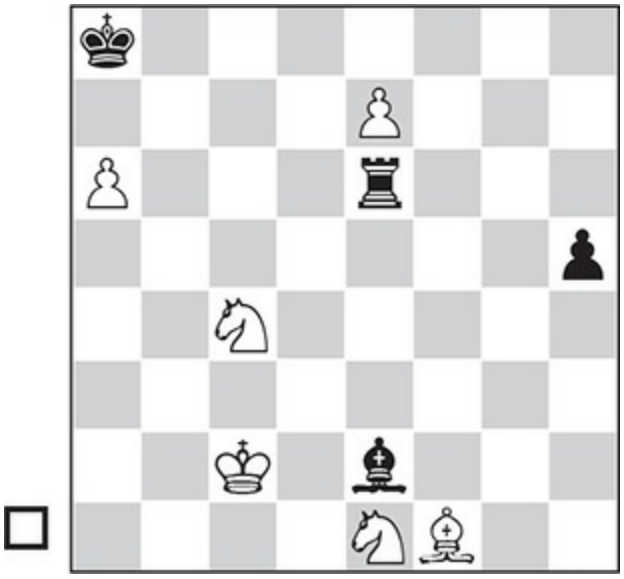
4...♘fg4 5.♘h3#.

5.♘f3#

Game 154 Level 3

Tigran Gorgiev

Study, 1929



White to play and win

The whole position rests on the advanced passed pawn on the e-file and how White manages to make use of it to his advantage:

1.♗g2+!

1.♘b6+? ♔b8 2.a7+ ♔xa7 3.♘c8+ ♔b8=.

1...♔b8!

1...♔a7? 2.♘d6! ♖xe7 3.♘c8++-.

2.a7+! ♔xa7 3.♘d6! ♗d1+!

An interesting defensive resource.

A) 3...♗b5 4.♘xb5+ ♔b8 (4...♔b6 5.♘d6+-) 5.♘d4! ♖xe1 6.♔d2+-; the rook has to step on a square where it will be forked!;

B) 3...♖xe7 4.♘c8++-.

4.♔xd1!

4.♔c3 ♗a4; 4.♔c1 ♖xe1 5.♔d2 ♖xe7.

4...♖xd6+ 5.♗d5!

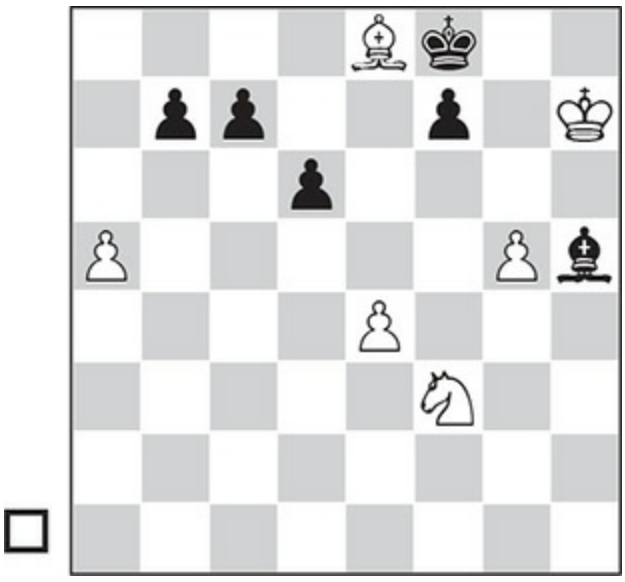
The sacrifices of two minor pieces in a row to stop the rook from stopping the passed pawn is aesthetic! 5.♘d3? ♖e6! 6.♘b4 ♔b6 7.♗h3 ♖e5 8.♗d7 ♖xe7 9.♘d5+ ♔c5 10.♘xe7 ♔d6!=.

5...♖xd5+ 6.♘d3! ♖xd3+ 7.♔e2 1-0

Game 155 Level 3

Tigran Gorgiev

Study, 1929



White to play and win

White is about to lose his extra piece, but it is his turn to move. How can White exploit this fact?

1.♗c6!

Trying to create a dangerous passed pawn on the rook file.

1.♗xf7? ♔xf7 2.♘h4 ♔e6 3.g6 ♗xg6+ 4.♘xg6 c5=; the extra piece alone is not sufficient for White.

1...bxc6

1...♗xf3 2.♗xb7+-.

2.a6

A) 2.♘d4?? ♗g6+ 3.♔h6 ♗xe4-+, Black opens the h1-a8 diagonal with an eventual ...c6-c5;

B) 2.♘e5?? dxe5 3.a6 ♗g6+ 4.♔h8 ♗xe4 5.a7 c5-+.

2...♗g6+

This is the main defensive idea.

A) 2...♗xf3 3.a7 ♗xe4+ 4.g6!, gaining a crucial tempo. Black's bishop cannot afford to leave the a8-h1 diagonal: 4...c5 5.a8♕+ ♗xa8 6.g7+;

B) 2...c5? 3.♘h4+-.

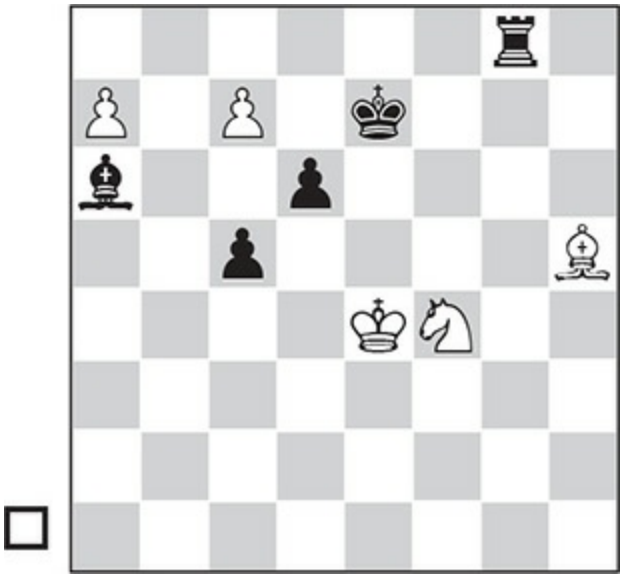
3.♔h8! ♗xe4

4.g6!!

But the two passed pawns prove too much for the bishop! The pawn advance clears the square for the white knight. The white knight is going to do all the

damage from now on.
4...fxg6 5.♘g5! ♗d5 6.♘e6+ ♔e7 7.♘c5!
A brilliant blocking sacrifice that was planned by White with striking manoeuvres.
7.♘xc7 ♗h1-+, with ...c6-c5 coming next.
7...dxc5 8.a7 1-0

Game 156 Level 3
Tigran Gorgiev
Study, 1934



White to play and win

White has two far advanced passed pawns, but they are under control as of now. It will all come down to how well White combines his pieces to make good use of the pawns.
1.♘d5+ ♔d7 2.c8♕+! ♖xc8 3.♗g4+ ♔c6 4.♗xc8 ♗b7

Until this point, the moves were more or less forced. But at this critical moment, White has to find a difficult resource. Using the elimination technique can help in this regard.

5.♔d3!

This mysterious king move has a purpose. It blocks the pawns and does something more important, which will become apparent later.

White can't win with 5.♘e7+? ♔c7+ 6.♗xb7 ♔xb7 7.♘c8 c4 (if 7...♔a8 8.♔d5 c4 9.♔c6 c3 10.♔b6 c2 11.♔a6 c1♕ 12.♘b6#; White mates just in time) 8.♔d4 d5 9.♔c3 ♔a8=. Black's connected pawns keep the king at bay.

5...♗a8 6.♔c4 ♗b7 7.a8♕! ♗xa8 8.♗a6! ♗b7

8...♔d7 9.♘b6+.

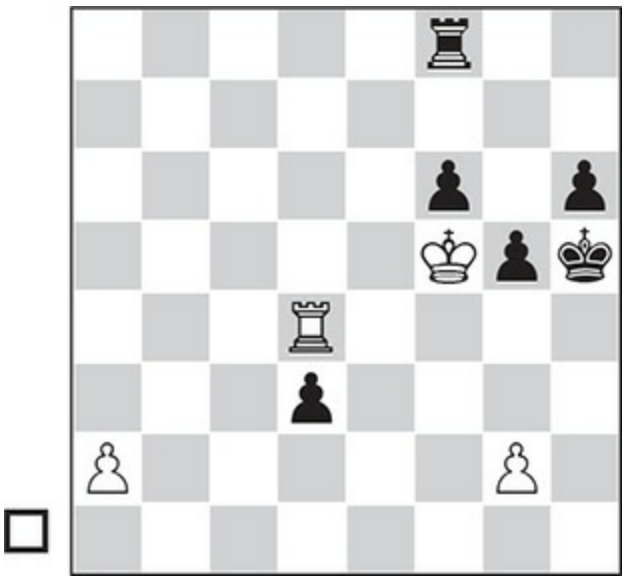
9.♗b5#

Without pawns, the mating pattern that White weaves with his bishop and knight is very pretty.

Game 157 Level 4

Richard Réti

Study, 1922



White to play and win

A brief look at the position shows that White's advantage consists of the precarious position of Black's king on the edge of the board. This will be the central theme of the play, but there are nuances based on move orders, defences based on stalemating themes and some potential zugzwangs.

1.g3

White threatens mate in two beginning with 2.♖h4+.

After the direct 1.♖xd3 g4 2.g3, 2...♖d8!= is a stalemate trick (2...♖a8! 3.♖d5 ♖a5! is another way to play for stalemate)!

1...♖g8

Stopping 3.g4 check after 2.♖h4+ gxh4.

2.♖b4!

A completely counter-intuitive move. White is able to notice a very fine nuance: he needs the rook on the b-file. He also needs to keep the d-pawn alive to get rid of stalemating ideas, at least for the time being.

A) 2.a4? g4 3.♔xf6 (3.♖xd3 ♖a8 4.♖d5 ♖a6! (4...♖a5? 5.♔e6++-) 5.♖b5 (5.♖c5 ♖a5=) 5...♖d6 6.a5 ♖d5+=) 3...♖g6+ 4.♔f7 ♖g5 5.♖xd3 ♖f5+ 6.♔g7 (6.♔e6 ♖f3, and it is now White who has to be careful to stay in the game as Black wins the g-pawn: 7.♖d5+ ♔g6 8.♔e5!, and White will hold, but he still needs to show a lot of accuracy) 6...♖a5 7.♖d6 ♖a7+ 8.♔f6 ♖a6= is another stalemating idea;

B) 2.♖xd3? ♖a8! and Black is in the driver's seat!;

C) 2.♖g4? d2 3.♖d4 g4! 4.♖xd2 ♖g5+ 5.♔xf6 ♖f5+!=;

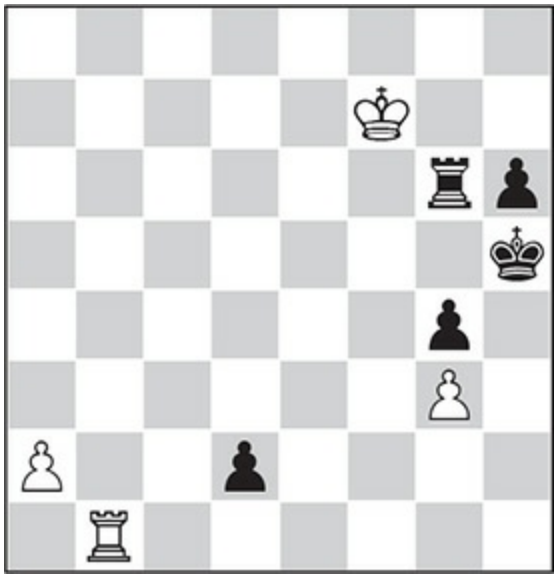
D) 2.♖d5? ♖a8-+;

E) 2.♖e4? g4 3.♖e1 ♖g5+ 4.♔xf6 ♖g6+! 5.♔f7 d2! 6.♖b1! d1♕ 7.♖xd1 ♖f6+ 8.♔g7 ♖f5=.

2...g4! 3.♖b1!

3.♖d4? ♖a8=; 3.a4? ♖d8=.

3...♖g5+ 4.♔xf6 ♖g6+ 5.♔f7 d2



6.a4!! d1♕!

6...♖b6 7.♖xb6 d1♕ 8.♖b5++-.

7.♖xd1 ♖f6+ 8.♔g7 ♖f5!

A) 8...♖g6+ 9.♔h7+-. White escapes stalemate by hiding here;

B) 8...♔g5 9.♖d5+ ♖f5 10.♖xf5+ ♔xf5 11.♔xh6 leads to a winning pawn endgame.

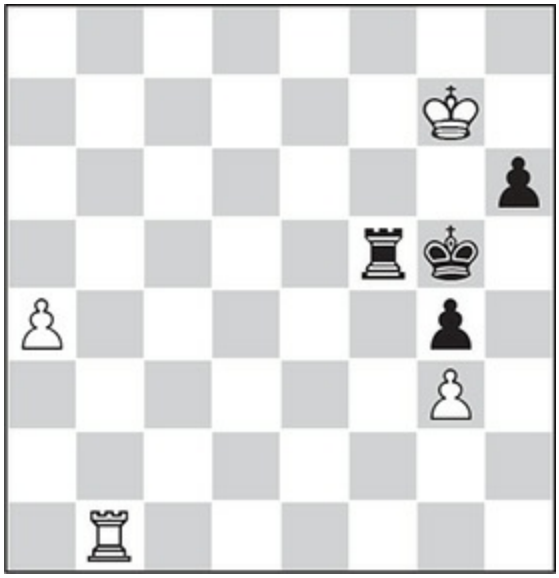
9.♖b1!

It is clearly important for the rook to be on the b-file.

9.♖d6? ♖a5 10.♖xh6+ (10.♖b6 ♖a7+! 11.♔f6 ♖a6! (11...♖a5? 12.♖b7!+-) 12.♖e6 ♖c6=) 10...♔g5 11.♖b6 ♖a7+!, and Black escapes from White's mating threats.

9...♔g5

9...♖g5+ 10.♔h7 ♖f5 11.♖b5+-.



10.♖b6!!

An incredible idea based on zugzwang.

10.♖b5 h5 11.♖xf5+ ♔xf5 12.a5 h4.

10...♖e5

10...h5 11.♖g6#; 10...♔h5 11.♖b5+-.

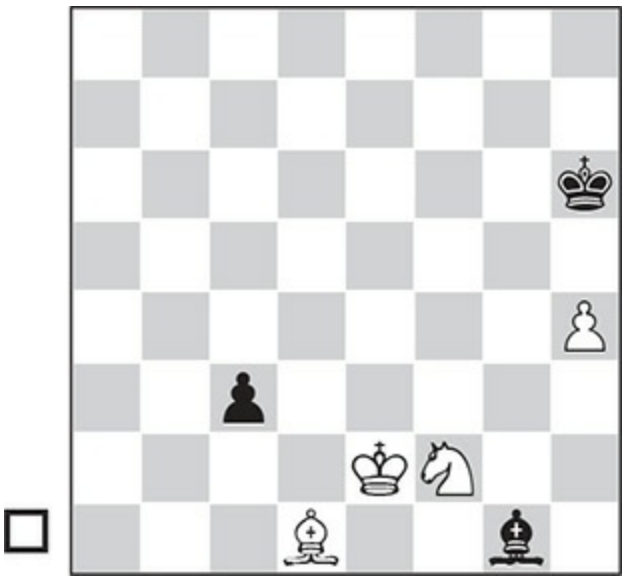
11.♖b5 1-0

White has gained a crucial tempo. Either Black has to exchange on b5 and give up a tempo, or he has to move back to f5 and once again lose a tempo. Either way, that single tempo gives White the win.

Game 158 Level 4

Tigran Gorgiev

Study, 1934



White to play and win

Black's c-pawn is not that dangerous because it's well- blockaded and can be captured when the time is right. The battle will clearly centre around Black trying to capture the h-pawn and White doing something about it, to either stop it or win material after allowing it.

1.♘d3!

A) 1.♘h3? c2! 2.♗xc2 ♗h2!= (2...♗c5? 3.♘f4 ♗d6 4.♘g6 ♔h5 5.♔f3 ♗c7 6.♗f5 ♗d6 7.♔g2 ♗c7 8.♔h3+-) 3.♔f2 (3.♔f3 ♔h5=; 3.♘g5 ♗g3 4.♘f3 ♔h5=) 3...♔h5 4.♘g5 ♗c7 (4...♔xh4 5.♘f3+ ♔h3 6.♗f5#) 5.♘f3 ♔g4 (5...♗d8 6.♔g3 ♗c7+ 7.♔h3 ♗d8 8.♗a4 ♗f6 9.♗e8+ ♔h6 10.♔g4; White consolidates and wins) 6.♔g2 ♗d8=. Black wins the h-pawn without conceding anything;

B) 1.♘e4 c2 2.♗xc2 ♔h5 3.♘g5 ♗b6 4.♘f3 ♗d8.

1...c2!

1...♔h5 2.♔f1+ and due to the presence of the ♗d1, White is able to play this discovered check and win the piece.

2.♗xc2 ♔h5

Now we can see the point of 1...c2. White does not have the ♔f1 discovered check anymore. White has a big challenge now, how can he defend the lone rook pawn?

3.♘e1!

To begin with, White stops Black's king from taking the pawn by means of a fork threat.

3.♘e5? ♗b6 4.♘g6 ♗d8, and Black wins the last pawn without White getting anywhere in return.

3...♗b6 4.♘g2!

The right way to defend the pawn; 4.♘f3? ♗d8=.

4...♗d8!

If 4...♔g4 5.♗e4 ♗d8 6.♗f3+ ♔g3 7.h5 White manages to hold on to his pawn and win.

It looks like the h-pawn is lost now, but White comes up with a brilliant concept:

5.♗d1!

White threatens to play ♔e2-f2-g3, defending his pawn.

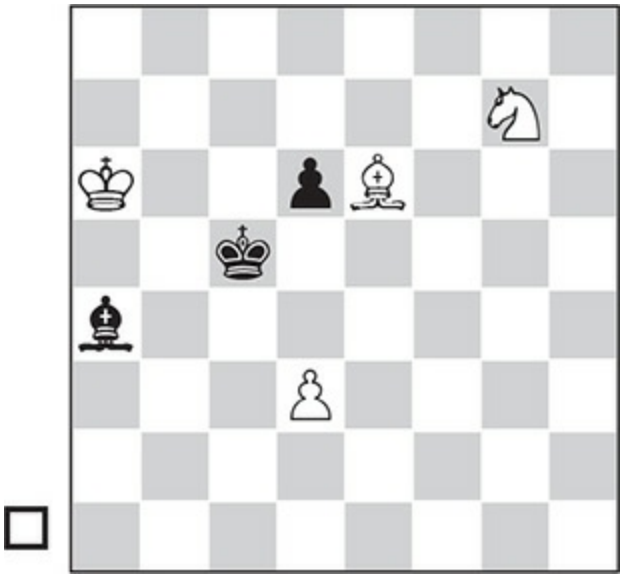
5...♗xh4! 6.♔e3+

By giving up the pawn, White has forced the black king to not move too far away from the bishop!

6...♔g5 7.♔f3!

A nice position of zugzwang. The bishop on h4 is dominated and falls!
7...♔h5 8.♔f4+ 1-0
White understood that he would lose the h-pawn at some point, and prepared himself excellently using some tactical ideas based on domination to win Black's bishop.

Game 159 Level 4
Genrikh Kasparyan
Study, 1955



White to play and win

In this position, White would ideally like to protect his d-pawn with his bishop and knight, since his king is a bit far from the scene. Black will fight to win White's remaining pawn, and in case he achieves this, White needs some other non-standard idea!
1.♗f5!
A) 1.♔a5? ♗c2 2.♗c4 ♔d4! (2...d5? 3.♗b5 ♔d4 4.♘e6+! (4.♘f5+ ♔c3!=) 4...♔e3 5.♘c5+-) 3.♘e6+ ♔e3! (3...♔c3? 4.♘f4+-) 4.d4 (White is threatening to play 5.d5, when it will be over for Black) 4...d5! 5.♗xd5 ♗f5 6.♔b4 ♗xe6 7.♔c5 ♗g4. Black should draw this ending without much fuss. For example, 8.♗c6 ♔f4 9.d5 ♔e5 10.d6 ♔e6=;

B) 1.♗c4? d5 2.♗a2 ♗b5+=.

1...♔d4 2.♘e6+!

A) 2.♗e4 ♗c2;

B) The other approach by the knight with 2.♘h5? does not work as the following lines show:

B1) 2...♗c2? 3.♘f4 ♔e5 4.♘e2 ♗d1 (4...♔xf5 5.♘d4++-) 5.♘c3 ♗c2 6.♘b5! ♔f4 (6...♗d1 7.♗h7+-) 7.♘a3!. The knight completes a brilliant dance. Finally, both the knight and bishop have come to the queenside to support the d3-pawn. On the queenside, they can be protected by their king: 7...♗d1 8.♗h7+-;

B2) 2...♗d1 3.♘f4 ♔e5 4.♘g2 ♔xf5 5.♘e3+ ♔e5 6.♘xd1 ♔d4 7.♘f2 ♔e3 8.♔b6 ♔xf2 9.d4 ♔e3 10.♔c6= (10.d5?? ♔e4 11.♔c6 ♔e5; Black would even win in this case).

2...♔e5

2...♔e3 3.♘c7! ♗c2 4.♘d5+ ♔d4 5.♘b4 and once the knight reaches the safe haven of b4, White wins easily.

3.♗h3!

3.♗g4? ♗b3! (3...♗d7? 4.d4+ ♔f6 5.d5 ♔e5 6.♔b6+-) 4.♘d8 ♔d4 5.♗f5 ♗c2 6.♘c6+ ♔c3!=. The bishop being on f5 is a problem, since the d3-pawn is pinned.

3...♗c2

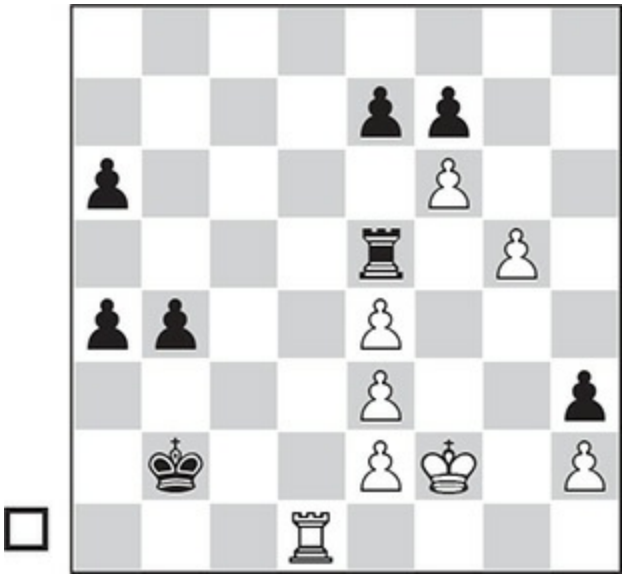
A) 3...♗b3 4.d4+ ♔e4 5.♗g2+! ♔e3 (5...♔f5 6.d5 ♔e5 7.♘c7+-) 6.d5 ♔f2 7.♗h1+-;

B) 3...♗d7 4.d4+! (4.♘f4? ♗xh3 5.♘xh3 ♔d4 6.♘f2 ♔e3 7.♔b6 ♔xf2 8.d4 ♔e3 9.d5 ♔d4 10.♔c6 ♔e5-+) 4...♔d5 5.♘f4++-.

4.d4+! ♔d5 5.♔b5! ♗h7 6.♔b4! ♗g8 7.♔c3! ♗xe6 8.♗g2#!

This is the pretty finish that White was aiming for: a checkmating pattern right in the centre of the board!
The problem with giving diagrams at interesting moments in a game is that it can easily become a clue to readers who want to solve the study without any help! Pardon me if that is the case here.

Game 160 Level 4
David Gurgenidze
Study, 1975



White to play and draw

Black has a very advanced king position. Besides that, he has connected passed pawns that seem to be impossible to contend with.

1.g6!

The other approach with 1.♖d2+! also works, but is a more complex variation: 1...♔c1 2.g6! ♖e6 3.e5 fxg6 4.f7 ♖xe5 5.e4 ♖e6 6.f8♕! (6.e5? ♖xe5 7.e4 ♖e6-+) 6...♖f6+ 7.♕xf6 exf6 8.♖d6! and now:

A) 8...a5 9.♖c6+ ♔b1 10.♖xf6 a3 11.e5 a2 12.♖xg6 ♔c2 13.♖c6+ ♔b2 14.e6 a1♕ 15.e7 ♕h1 16.e8♕ ♕xh2+=;

B) 8...a3 9.♖xa6 ♔b2 10.♖xf6 a2 11.♖a6 b3 12.e5 ♔c3 13.e6 b2 14.e7 b1♕ 15.e8♕ ♕f5+ 16.♔g3 ♕g5+=;

C) 8...b3 9.♖c6+! (9.♖xf6?? a3! 10.♖xa6 a2 11.e5 b2-+) 9...♔d2 10.♖xf6! a3 11.e5! b2 (11...a2 12.♖xa6=) 12.♖b6 ♔c3 13.e6=.

1...fxg6

1...♖e6 2.e5 fxg6 3.f7 transposes.

2.f7 ♖e6 3.e5!

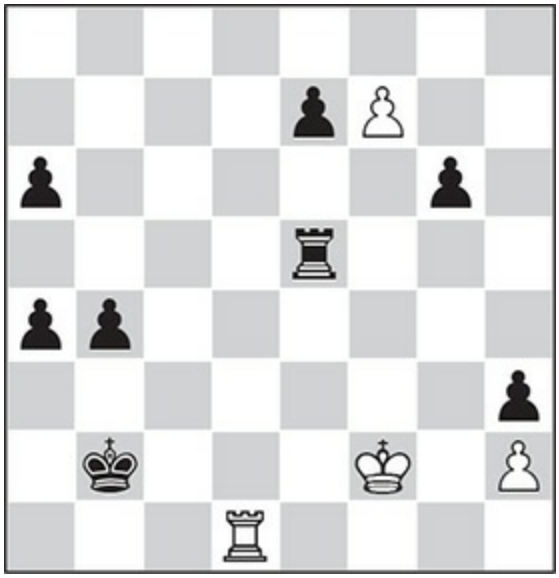
A) Again, 3.♖d2+! ♔c1 4.f8♕ (4.♔e1 ♖f6 5.♖d1+ ♔c2 6.♖d2+ ♔c3 7.♖d3+ ♔b2) 4...♖f6+ 5.♕xf6 exf6 6.♖d6;

B) 3.f8♕! ♖f6+ 4.♕xf6+ exf6 5.♖d6 a3 6.♖xf6 a2 7.♖xa6 b3 8.e5 ♔c3 9.e6 b2 10.e7 b1♕ 11.e8♕ ♕f5+=.

3...♖xe5 4.e4 ♖e6 5.e5!

White could also go for 5.f8♕! ♖f6+ 6.♕xf6+ exf6 7.♖d6 a3 8.♖xf6 a2 9.♖xa6 b3 10.e5 a1♕ 11.♖xa1 ♔xa1 12.e6 b2 13.e7 b1♕ 14.e8♕±.

5...♖xe5 6.e4! ♖e6 7.e5 ♖xe5



8.♖h1!!

This is the incredible concept for which White sacrificed all his pawns. He wants to shut his rook on h1 and go for a stalemate!

8.f8♕ ♖f5+ 9.♕xf5 gxf5-+; 8.♖d2+ ♔c3.

8...a3 9.f8♕ ♖f5+ 10.♔g1! a2 11.♕f6+!

11.♕h8+?? ♖f6-+.

11...e5!? 12.♕xa6! ½-½

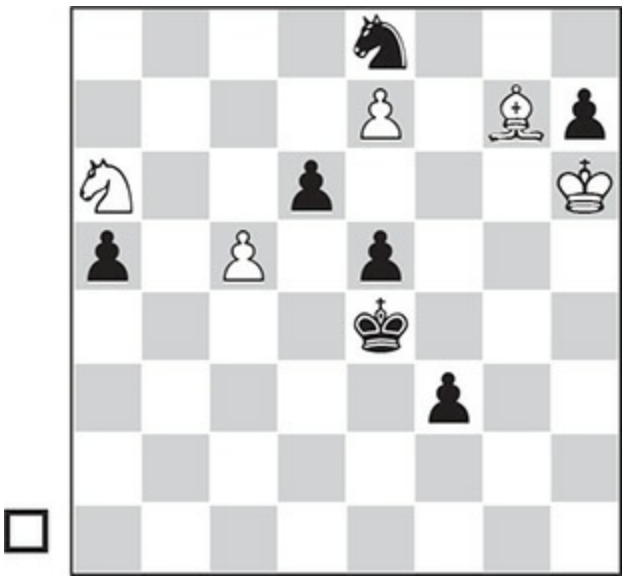
White will sacrifice the queen on the next move, ending in stalemate.

The main line has a unique and pretty stalemating idea. However, along the way White also had a couple of other alternatives that could have ultimately maintained equality.

Game 161 Level 4

Leonid Kubbel

Study, 1941



White to play and win

Black's f-pawn is very advanced, and White's minor pieces look too far away to do anything about it. Moreover, White's advanced pawn on e7 is firmly blocked by Black's knight. How does White win here?

1.♘c7!

When normal moves do not work, we should consider abnormal moves or desperados a little more seriously to reach our objective. For many upcoming players, this is very difficult to do. When normal things do not work, they also reject the abnormal attempts to reach the objective – for no apparent reason, or for simplistic reasons; for example, a temporary loss in material, or a dangerous-looking attack from the opponent, etc.

1...♘xc7

A) 1...f2?! 2.♘xe8 f1♕ 3.♘f6++-;

B) 1...♘xg7 2.♔xg7 f2 3.e8♕ f1♕ 4.cxd6+-.

2.cxd6 f2

2...♘e8?! 3.d7+-.

3.dxc7 f1♕

Now White has a not so tough choice to make. In such situations, where we are faced with multiple choices to consider, the first step is to realise that we have a choice. This may look too obvious for experienced players, but upcoming players usually think one line at a time, and as a result their

analysis goes in a straight line without branches along the way. In such cases, they analyse the move they have seen first and naively believe it is the only move in the position. This habit has to be broken at the early stages of a player's career.

4.c8♕!

4.e8♕? ♕h1+ 5.♕h5 (5.♔g5 ♕c1+ 6.♔h5 ♕xc7=) 5...♕c1+ 6.♔xh7 ♕xc7=; White loses his last pawn without anything in return for it.

4...♕f4+

4...♕h1+ 5.♔g5 ♕g2+ 6.♕g4++-.

5.♔xh7

5.♔h5?? could even lose! 5...♕f7+ 6.♔h4 (6.♔h6 ♕g6#; 6.♔g5 ♕xg7+ 7.♔h4 ♕xe7+-+) 6...♕xe7+-+.

5...♕h4+ 6.♔g6!

6.♔g8 ♕xe7.

6...♕xe7

It appears that Black has equalised by removing White's last pawn from the board. However, now comes the real idea of the whole composition:

7.♗f8! ♕a7

7...♕h4 8.♕c4+.

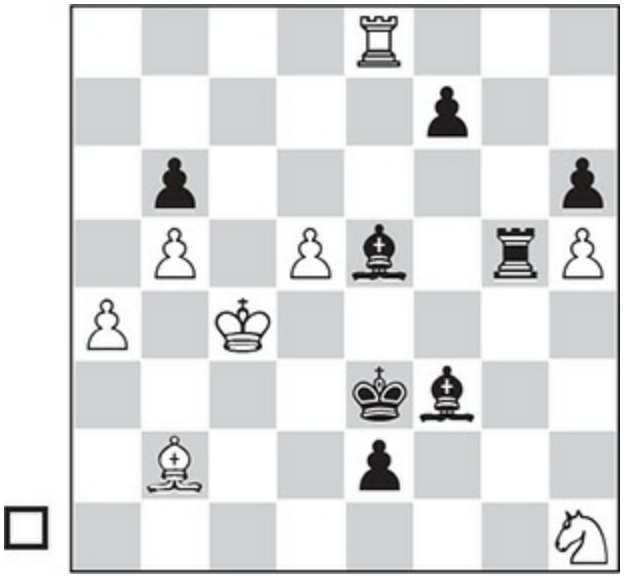
8.♗c5! 1-0

Watch how beautifully the white units are coordinating to trap the queen in

an unexpected domination!
In studies, each and every unit will have a concrete purpose to serve. Imagine the creativity involved to visualise the final position, and then finding a creative way to reach it by creating the starting position!

As a young player, I knew Timman only as a player from books, but subsequently I came to know that he is also a famous composer. I like the following study very much.

Game 162 Level 4
Jan Timman
Study, 1973



White to play and win

A complex position with a cute mating theme in one of the simple lines. In the other lines, White uses tactical ideas with his own passed pawns and create domination in various lines.

1.♖xe5+!

A) 1.♗xe5? ♗xd5+!-+;

B) 1.♗d4+? ♔f4 2.♘f2 ♗e4-+;

C) 1.♗c1+?! ♔e4 2.♘f2+ ♔f5 3.♖xe5+! ♔xe5 4.♘d3+ ♔d6!

(4...♔e4? 5.♗xg5 hxg5 6.h6+-) 5.♗f4+ ♔e7! (5...♔d7? 6.♗xg5 hxg5 7.♘e5++-) 6.♗xg5+!? (6.d6+!? ♔e6! 7.♗xg5 hxg5 8.d7 ♔e7! (8...♔xd7? 9.♘e5++-) 9.h6 ♗e4=) 6...hxg5 7.h6 (7.a5? ♗e4! (7...bxa5? 8.b6!; 8.♔c5 ♗e4 9.♘e1 a4 10.♔b4 ♗xd5-+ or 10.b6 ♔d7-+) 8.♘e1 bxa5 9.b6 ♔d7-+) 7...♗e4 8.♘e1 ♔d6 9.♔d4 ♗g6 and Black survives the danger.

1...♔f4

A) 1...♔d2 2.♗c3+ ♔c2 3.♖xg5+-;

B) 1...♖xe5?! 2.♗c1+ ♔e4 3.♘g3#, a nice mate in the centre!;

C) 1...♗e4 and now:

C1) 2.♖xe4+? ♔xe4 3.♘f2+ ♔f3 4.♘d3 ♔e4 5.♘f2+= (5.d6?? ♖d5 6.♘f2+ ♔f5-+);

C2) 2.♗c3 ♖xe5;

C3) 2.♗d4+ ♔f3 3.♖xe4 ♔xe4 4.♘f2+ ♔f5 5.♘d3 ♔e4 6.♗xb6 ♖xd5 7.♘e1 ♖d1 8.♗f2 ♖a1 9.♔b4 ♔d5+-; White blockades Black's passed pawns with his minor pieces and will slowly start to push his queenside passed pawns;

C4) 2.♗c1+ ♔f3 3.♖xg5! e1♕ (3...hxg5 4.♗d2+-) 4.♖g3+ ♕xg3 (4...♔e2 5.♖e3++-) 5.♘xg3 ♔xg3 6.♗xh6 ♔g4 7.♗e3+-.

2.♘f2 ♖xe5 3.♘d3+

3.♗xe5+? ♔xe5 4.♘d3+ ♔d6-+.

3...♔e4

3...♔f5 4.♗xe5+-.

4.♗xe5 e1♕ 5.♘xe1 ♗e2+ 6.♔b4!

A) 6.♘d3? ♗xd3+ 7.♔c3 ♔xe5 8.♔xd3 ♔xd5 9.♔e3 ♔c5 10.♔e4 ♔b4 11.♔f5=;

B) 6.♔c3? ♔xe5 7.a5!? bxa5 8.b6 ♗a6 9.♘d3+ ♔xd5=.

6...♔xe5 7.a5!

It looks like 7.♘g2? is also possible,

analysis diagram

but 7...♗d3! (7...♕d6? 8.♘e3 (8.a5? bxa5+ 9.♕xa5 ♗xb5=) 8...♗xh5 9.a5! bxa5+ 10.♕xa5, White's knight clearly dominates the bishop. White wins like in a pawn endgame!) refutes this effectively: 8.♘e3 f5=.

7...bxa5+

7...♕xd5 8.a6+-.

8.♕c5! ♗xb5

8...a4 9.b6 ♗a6 10.♕c6+-.

9.♘f3+ ♕e4

10.♘g5+! ♔e5

10...♔f5 11.♔xb5 ♔xg5 12.d6 ♔f6 13.♔c6+-.

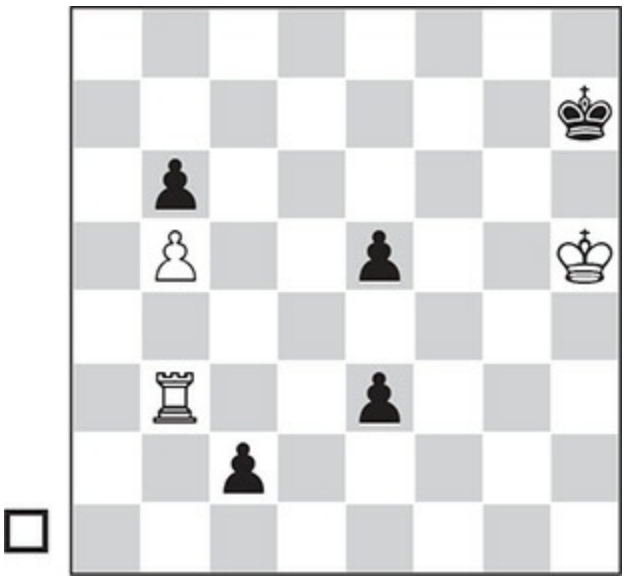
11.♘xf7+ ♔f6 12.♔xb5 ♔xf7 13.♔xa5! 1-0

A nice endgame based on the domination theme.

Game 163 Level 4

Leonid Kubbel

Study, 1950



White to play and draw

White needs to stop the two black pawns on the verge of promotion. He cannot do that without reaching the first rank, but he clearly has no time for this. What else can be done?

1.♖c3! e2 2.♖c7+ ♔g8 3.♔g6! ♔f8 4.♔f6!

4.♖f7+?? ♔e8 5.♔g7 c1♕-+.

4...♔e8 5.♔e6! ♔d8

This looks like the end for White...

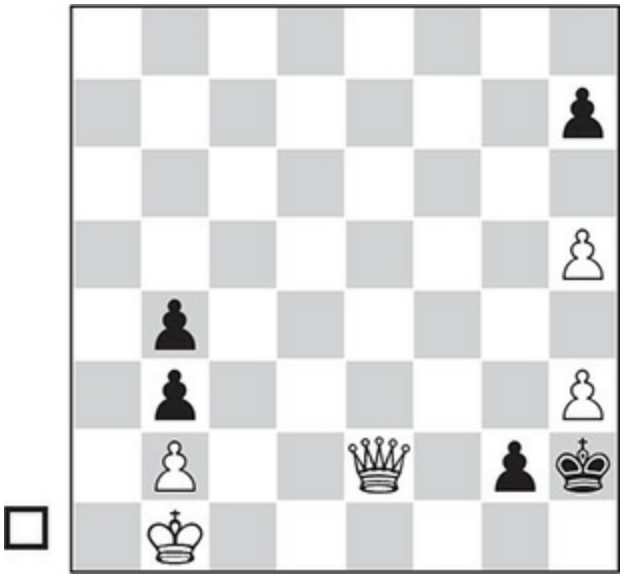
6.♖xc2!

White uses the particular configuration of the pawns and the position of Black's queen to show that there is not a single check for Black. Moreover, Black cannot save himself from perpetual check!

6...e1♕ 7.♖g2!!

Accuracy is still required. 7.♖h2? does not work because of 7...♕e4 8.♖h8+ (8.♔d6 ♕b4+) 8...♔c7, and there is no check on the 7th rank.
7...♕e4 8.♖g8+ ♔c7 9.♖g7+ ½-½

Game 164 Level 4
Eliyahu Zakon
Study, 1953

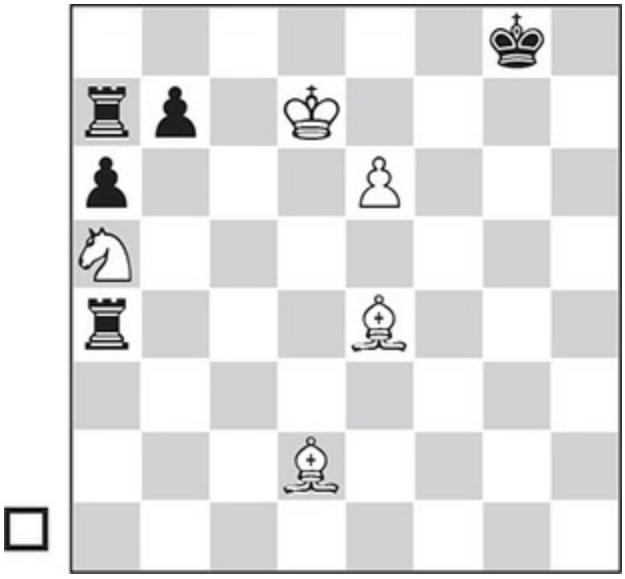


White to play and win

1.♔a1!
The first move is special already. White actually creates space on b1 for his queen! Basically, White wants to capture the pawn on h7 and block Black's check on g1 by interposing on b1.
1...♔h1 2.♕e4 ♔h2 3.♕e5+ ♔h1 4.♕d5 ♔h2 5.♕d6+ ♔h1 6.♕c6!
White employs a staircase manoeuvre to win Black's h-pawn and then transpose into a won pawn endgame.
6...♔h2
Once the pawn goes to h6, the queen has to block Black's check on c1. Hence, the king is needed on b1: 6... h6 7.♔b1! ♔h2 8.♕d6+ ♔h1 9.♕xh6 g1♕+ 10.♕c1!+-.
7.♕c7+ ♔h1 8.♕xh7 g1♕+ 9.♕b1! 1-0
Winning Black's h-pawn and interpolating a queen check to force the trade

was the theme of this study. Despite its apparent simplicity, it creates a fine artistic impression.

Game 165 Level 4
Viktor Matdinov
Study, 2013



White to play and win

Three minor pieces against two rooks is a rare imbalance. White's advanced passed pawn is the key factor to his advantage. We also observe that Black's rook on a7 is completely lacking coordination, especially because of the placement of his queenside pawns. White will use various tactical ideas to go with these positional factors in striving for victory by checkmate:

1.♗d5! ♖d4!

1...b6+?! 2.♔d6 ♖d4 3.♘c6 ♖xd2 4.♘xa7+-.

2.e7+! ♖xd5+ 3.♔e6 ♖e5+!

3...♖a8 4.♔xd5 ♔f7 5.♔d6! (5.♗g5? ♖g8 6.♗h4 ♖h8=) 5...♖e8 6.♗g5+-.

4.♔xe5 ♔f7

4...♖a8 5.♘xb7 ♔f7 6.♗g5+-.

5.♘c4!!

5.♗b4? b5 6.♘c6 ♖d7! 7.♗d6

analysis diagram

7...b4! (giving his pawns to set up a stalemate; 7...a5? 8.♕d5! a4 (8...♔e8 9.♕e6 b4 10.♘e5 ♖b7 11.♘g4+-) 9.♘e5+) 8.♗xb4 (8.♕d5 b3=) 8...a5! 9.♗d6 a4! 10.♕d5 ♔e8 11.♕e6 a3 12.♘b4 a2! 13.♘xa2 ♖xe7+ 14.♗xe7=.

5...♔xe7 6.♘b6!

Dominating the black rook.

6...♔d8 7.♗a5 ♔c7 8.♕d5! ♔b8 9.♕d6 ♖a8 10.♘d7+ ♔c8

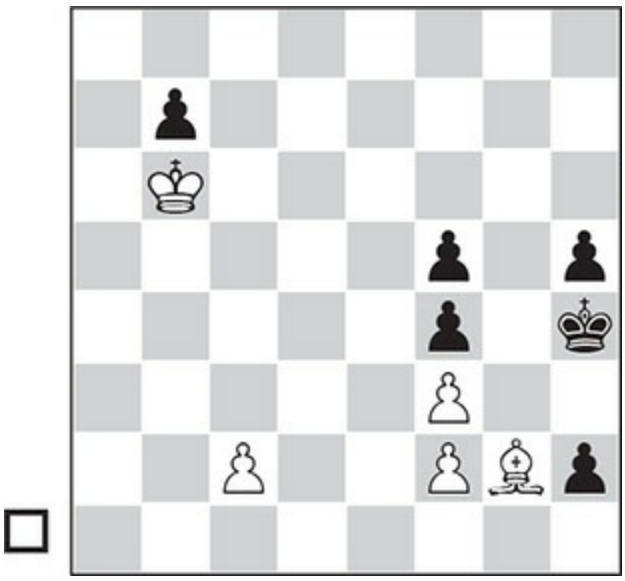
10...♔a7 11.♗b6#.

11.♗c7 b5 12.♕c6 ♖a7 13.♘b6#

Game 166 Level 4

Filip Bondarenko

Study, 2016



White to play and win

White's extra bishop is severely limited by his own pawns, especially those on the f-file. Initially, it appears to be a race between White's passed pawn on the queenside and Black's on the kingside. But after calculation, that approach does not seem to lead us to our goal. Perhaps we need to conceive of something else...

1.♗h1!

White lets the h2-pawn live, not out of love but out of a self-preservation instinct! Note that the h2-square is no longer available for Black's king.

A) The direct approach with 1.c4? does not work, because of 1...h1♕ 2.♗xh1 ♔h3 3.c5 ♔h2 4.♔xb7 ♔xh1 5.c6 h4 6.c7 h3 7.c8♕ h2 8.♕xf5 ♔g2 9.♕xf4 (9.♕g4+ ♔xf2 10.♕h3 ♔g1=) 9...h1♕ 10.♕g3+ ♔f1=;

B) 1.♔c5?? h1♕ 2.♗xh1 ♔h3 3.♔d4 ♔h2 4.♔e5 ♔xh1 5.♔xf4 (5.♔xf5 ♔g2 6.♔g5 ♔xf3 7.♔xh5 ♔xf2) 5...♔g2-+.

1...♔h3

2.c3!!

An absolutely amazing concept! White is actually playing to, believe it or not, checkmate Black!

The seemingly more natural 2.c4? leads only to a draw after 2...h4 3.♔a7 b5 4.c5 b4 5.c6 b3 6.c7 b2 7.c8♕ b1♕=, supporting the f5-pawn!

2...h4

2...♔h4 3.c4!. Now White has gained a very valuable tempo compared to the 2.c4 variation, and that is just enough to ensure victory. For example, 3...♔h3 4.c5 h4 5.♔a7!+-.

3.♔b5! b6 4.♔c4! b5+ 5.♔d3 b4 6.♔e2 bxc3 7.♔f1 c2 8.♗g2#

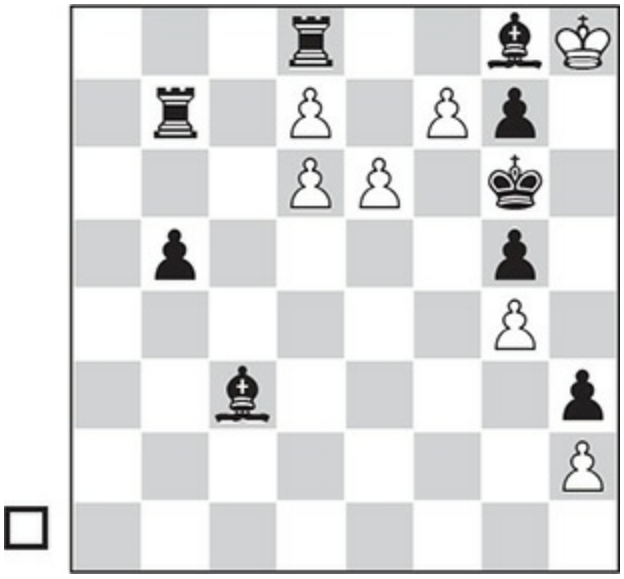
Everything falls in place by a single tempo. A lone bishop checkmating the king, assisted by both our and the opponent's pawns is a spectacle!

Gurgenidze's famous pet theme is a king walk and Afek's theme is underpromotion.

Game 167 Level 4

Yochanan Afek

Study, 1978



White to play and draw

1.e7!

The white king is stuck in the corner, and all Black has to do is give one check and it's over.

1...♖bb8

A) 1...♖bxd7? 2.fxg8♕ ♖xg8+ 3.♔xg8+-;

B) 1...♔xf7 (threatening to play 2...g6#) 2.exd8♘+! (the only way to stop 2...g6#) 2...♔f8! (2...♔g6? – with the king on g6, Black cannot get to g6 with the pawn, can he? 3.♘xb7 ♗f6 4.♔xg8+-) 3.♘e6+!, (anything to stop 3...g6#) 3...♗xe6 4.d8♕+ ♔f7 5.♕g8+ (if White does not force things, Black has a material superiority and can simply advance the b-pawn. White will then not only have to worry about the king, but also about the material imbalance) 5...♔f6 6.d7! (6.♕f8+? ♖f7 7.♕d8+ ♔e5 8.♕xg5+ ♔xd6-+) 6...♖xd7 (6...♗xg8?! 7.d8♕+ ♔e5 8.♔xg8, and now Black does not have such a large material superiority) 7.♕xg7+! ♖xg7, and it ends in a stalemate!;

C) 1...♗xf7+ 2.exd8♕ ♔h6! (2...b4? 3.♕e8+-) 3.♕xg5+ ♔xg5 4.d8♕+ ♗f6 5.♕c8! (the double attack forces Black's next move) 5...g6+ (5...♔h6? 6.g5+! ♔xg5 7.♕xb7+-) 6.♔h7 ♗d5+ 7.d7↰; White is threatening 8.♕c1 check and gets sufficient counterplay, with the mate threats guarded against and the d7-pawn alive and disrupting the coordination of Black's pieces.

2.e8♗!!

2.e8♕? ♗xf7-+. White will be forced to move the queen, and there are no stalemate ideas anymore, only checkmate.

2...♗h7!

The only way to keep chances to play for a win.

2...♗xf7 is stalemate already.

3.f8♖+!!

3.f8♕+? ♔h6 4.♕f6+ g6!. Here again, the white queen will be forced to move, and there are no more stalemate ideas: 5.♕xc3 ♖xe8+-+.

3...♔h6 4.♖f6+ g6 ½-½

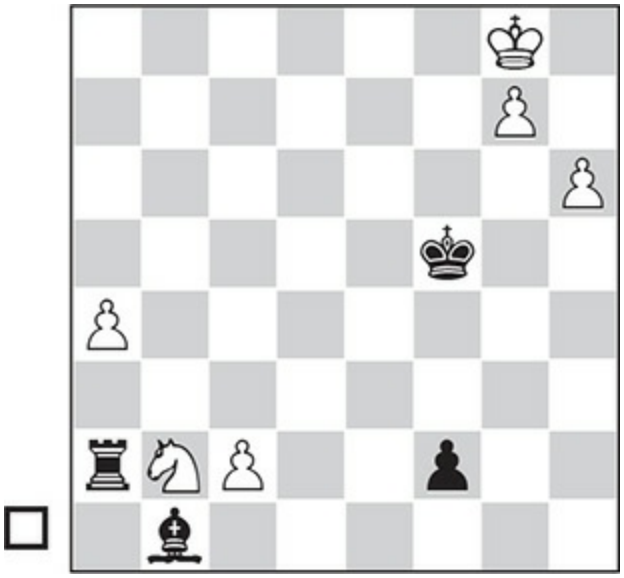
Afek must have put in a lot of effort to compose such a beauty, with so many underpromotions culminating in a stalemate.

Here is another fantastic study by the same composer.

Game 168 Level 5

Yochanan Afek

Study, 1991



TASK 1: *White to play and draw. Time to think: 15 to 20 minutes.*

1.♘d1!

A) 1.h7? f1♕ 2.h8♕ ♖xb2!. Black simply has too much extra material, and does not have to force things to win: 3.♕h5+ ♔e4 and Black will win this eventually;

B) 1.♔h8? f1♕! 2.g8♕ ♕f4! (this is not the only way, but it's the most efficient) 3.♕f7+ ♔g5 4.♕xf4+ ♔xf4 5.♔g7 ♗xc2-+;

C) 1.♘c4? (trying to block the a2-g8 diagonal for the bishop and possibly gaining a tempo to promote the g-pawn) 1...♖xa4 and now:

C1) 2.♔h8. Now Black has to play accurately to win: 2...♖a8+ 3.g8♕ ♖xg8+ 4.♔xg8 ♗a2 (4...f1♕? 5.♘e3+=) 5.♔g7 (the point, to prevent Black from promoting the pawn and taking the knight with his new queen; 5.h7 will lose even more quickly: 5...f1♕ 6.h8♕ ♕xc4+ 7.♔h7 ♕h4+ 8.♔g7 ♕f6+ 9.♔h7 ♕g6#) 5...♗xc4 6.h7 f1♕ (now Black's pieces can combine well to deliver mate to the cornered white king) 7.h8♕ ♕g1+ 8.♔f8 ♕c5+! 9.♔g7 ♕e7+ 10.♔h6 ♕g5+ 11.♔h7 ♕g6#;

C2) Including the intermediate check before playing ♔h8 does not help: 2.♘e3+ ♔g6 3.♔h8 ♗a2 4.c4 ♗xc4 5.h7. It looks like the g-pawn cannot be prevented from promoting with check, but Black has an unexpected key resource: 5...♗g8!, exploiting the cornered white king position to weave a

mating net around it: 6.♔xg8 (6.hxg8♕ ♖h4+, and Black wins easily) 6...♖a8#.

D) 1.♔h7? is the most attractive option before White, other than the solution. It comes very close to making a draw, but falls just short: 1...♖xb2! 2.g8♕ ♖b7+ (driving the white king to the corner) 3.♔h8 f1♕! 4.♕f8+ (4.♕d5+ ♔g6 5.♕g8+ ♔xh6 transposes)

analysis diagram

4...♔g6! (Black's king will have to go forward with the threat of mate, before going backward later to avoid checks; 4...♔g5? 5.♕xf1+-) 5.♕g8+ (5.♕e8+ ♖f7 6.♕e4+ ♕f5 7.♕g2+ ♔xh6 8.♕h2+ ♕h5) 5...♔xh6 6.♕e6+ ♔g5 7.♕d5+ ♕f5 8.♕xb7 ♕f8+ 9.♔h7 ♗xc2+ with mate on the next move.

1...f1♕!

A) 1...♖xc2 2.♔h8! ♗a2 3.h7 is a draw;

B) 1...♔g6 is an interesting attempt to win, but White has a fantastic resource to save the game: 2.♘xf2 ♖xa4 3.♔h8! ♗a2 4.h7 ♗g8!. Again Black has this resource, which we saw earlier in the 1.♘c4 variation.

B1) Queening by 5.hxg8♕?? loses everything with check: 5...♖h4+ 6.♕h7+ ♖xh7+ 7.♔g8 ♖xg7+ 8.♔f8 ♖f7+-+;

B2) But here, White escapes with an ingenious underpromotion:

5.hxg8♘!? ♖h4+ 6.♘h6 (the point; Black cannot capture the g-pawn and the knight together) 6...♖xh6+ 7.♔g8=.

C) 1...♖xa4 2.♔h8! ♗a2 3.h7 ♖h4!? (3...♗g8? does not work here, as the black king is too far away: 4.hxg8♕ ♖h4+ 5.♕h7++-) and now:

C1) 4.c4? ♗xc4 5.♘xf2 ♔g6 6.g8♕+ ♗xg8 7.♔xg8 ♖xh7. This position without the c2-pawn is lost for White. There are mating threats against the white king in the corner. More importantly, the white knight is separated from the white king, and it will be lost soon against the combined power of rook and king. For example: 8.♘d3 ♖a7 9.♘e5+ ♔f5 10.♘f7 ♖d7-+;

C2) 4.♘xf2! ♔g6 5.g8♕+ ♗xg8 6.♔xg8 ♖xh7 7.♘d3! (because of the c2-pawn, White's knight cannot be trapped, even though it is separated from the king) 7...♖a7 8.♔f8 and the king will simply walk around without worrying about the abandoned knight.

2.♘e3+ ♔g6 3.♘xf1 ♖xa4

3...♖xc2 4.♔h8=.

4.♔h8 ♗a2

It looks like the white king is cornered, and Black's pieces are combining well, but:

5.c4!

A) 5.g8♕+ ♗xg8-+;

B) The immediate 5.h7? loses in the most instructive way:

analysis diagram

5...♖h4! (5...♗g8? 6.hxg8♘! ♖h4+ 7.♘h6 draws as we have seen before) 6.g8♕+ ♗xg8 7.♔xg8. Despite the presence of the c2-pawn, White loses this position, as the knight is not in time to get into the protection of the c2-pawn. More importantly, the absence of the g7-pawn means the black rook can move to threaten mate and attack the knight at the same time: 7...♖xh7 8.♘g3 ♖e7! (dominating the white knight) 9.♔f8 ♖e3 10.♘h1 ♖h3 11.♘f2 ♖f3+, eventually winning the knight.

5...♗xc4 6.h7 ♗g8!

An interesting winning attempt.

7.hxg8♘!

7.hxg8♕? ♖h4+ 8.♕h7+ ♖xh7+ 9.♔g8 ♖xg7+ 10.♔h8 ♖e7-+.

7...♖h4+ 8.♘h6 ♖xh6+ 9.♔g8 ♖h3

9...♖h7 10.♘e3! ♖xg7+ 11.♔f8 ♖d7 12.♘c4=. Even 12.♔e8 is sufficient to make a draw here, although it's risky: 12...♖d4 13.♘c2! (this is a peculiar position, where the white knight is hopelessly away from the king, but White still manages to salvage a draw; Black is unable to keep the knight away from the king for long) 13...♖d5 14.♔e7=.

10.♘d2! ½-½

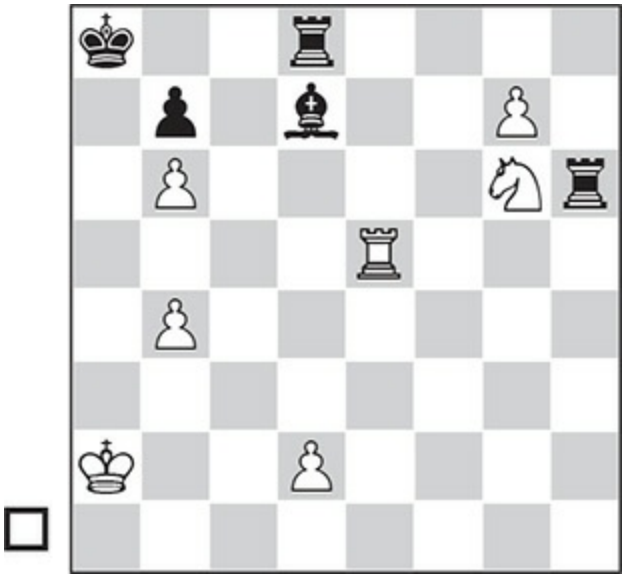
The knight will reach the safety of the king's protection soon.

10.♔f8? ♖f3+ 11.♔e7 ♔xg7 12.♘d2 ♖e3+ 13.♔d6 ♖d3+-+.

Game 169 Level 5

Oleg Pervakov

Study, 1993



White to play and win

White is down a rook, but has a few things in his favour. The black king is in a spot of bother, and the pawn on g7 is far advanced.

1.♘f8

White looks to be winning already, as there is no easy way for Black to stop the g-pawn from promoting. But looks can be deceiving.

1...♗b5!?

Black finds an interesting resource to keep fighting. The black rook becomes active. It hopes to create trouble for the white king, and also to keep an eye on the g-pawn.

1...♗c6 2.♖a5+ ♔b8 3.g8♕ (it is not over yet) 3...♖xd2+ 4.♔b3 ♖h3+ 5.♔c4 ♖c2+ 6.♔d4 ♖d2+ 7.♔e5. Now it is, as the king will soon escape from the series of checks, and White wins the game.

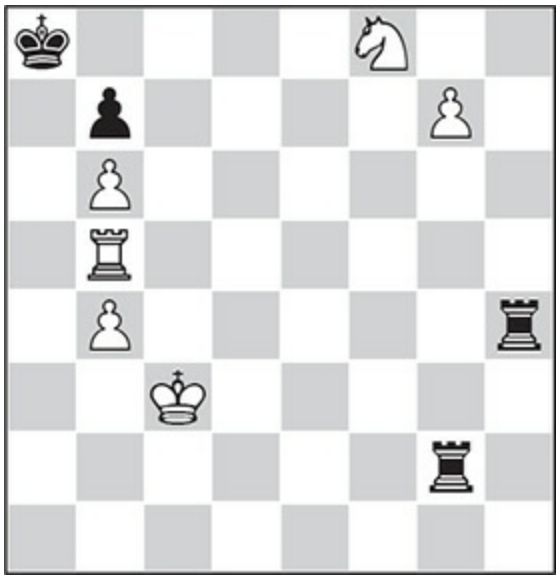
2.♖xb5 ♖xd2+ 3.♔b3 ♖h3+ 4.♔c4 ♖h4+

The best practical defence for Black.

A) 4...♖g2 5.♖a5+ ♔b8 6.♘d7+ ♔c8 7.♘f6 ♖h4+ 8.♔d3 ♔b8 9.♖e5, and it will be mate soon;

B) 4...♖g3 5.♖e5 ♖c2+ 6.♔d5 ♖c8 7.♘e6! ♔b8 8.♖g5+-.

5.♔c3 ♖g2!



Black has managed to put up a good fight. He has the rook behind White's passed pawn and has created a few mating threats around White's king too. White has to play accurately to find a win. As of now, the white pieces are scattered all over the board and they need to coordinate well to have any chance to win this position.

6.♖e5!

This is the best square for the rook, as will be apparent soon.

A) 6.♖c5? ♖g3+ 7.♔b2 ♖h2+ 8.♔b1=; White cannot block the checks with his rook, when one of Black's rooks is safe on the g-file and the other rook is the one giving the check: 8.♖c2? ♖xc2+ 9.♔xc2 ♖xg7 and the win for White is gone for sure;

B) 6.♖d5? ♖g3+ 7.♖d3 (blocking with the rook makes sense now, as the g-pawn is safe after the rooks are exchanged) 7...♖hh3! 8.♔c4! ♖g4+ 9.♖d4 ♖hh4! 10.♔c5 ♖g5+ 11.♖d5 ♖hh5!=. White's king has nowhere to escape from the harassing rooks.

6...♖g3+ 7.♔c2

7.♔d2 also leads to the same continuation as in the game.

7...♖h2+ 8.♔d1 ♖g1+ 9.♖e1

The general rule of thumb is that when Black gives check with the rook on the g-file, White can block with his rook, as the g-pawn is not hanging after the rook exchange.

9...♖hh1!?

This resource for Black should be identified in the initial position by the solver.

9...♖hg2 10.♘e6! ♔b8 11.♖xg1 ♖xg1+ 12.♔e2! (12.♔d2? ♔c8 13.♔e3 ♔d7 14.♔f2 ♖g4 15.♔f3 ♖g1=) 12...♔c8 13.♔f2! (this is a very important gain of tempo) 13...♖g4 14.♔f3 ♖g1 15.♔f4 ♔d7 16.♘g5+-.

10.♔d2! ♖g2+

10...♖h2+ 11.♔d3 (as was seen earlier, White cannot block the checks with his rook when Black's other rook is safe on the g-file; 11.♖e2? ♖xe2+ 12.♔xe2 ♖xg7) 11...♖h3+ 12.♔c4 ♖h4+ 13.♔b5. The king will hide from the side checks on the a-file.

11.♖e2 ♖hh2! 12.♔d3 ♖g3+

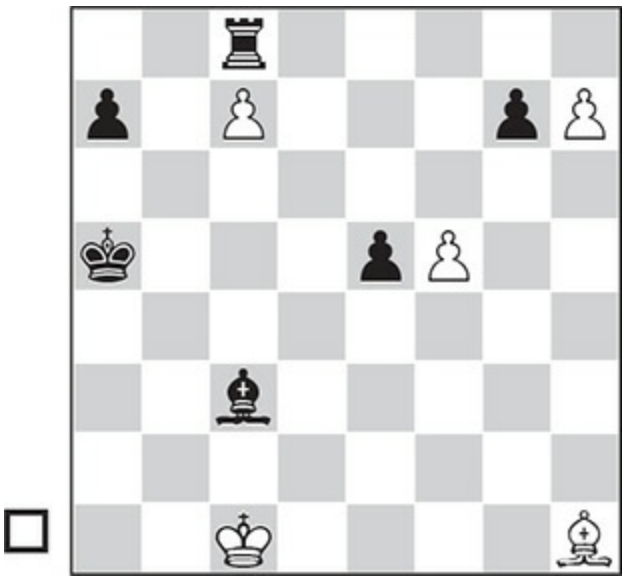
12...♖h3+ 13.♔c4 ♖h4+ 14.♔b5+-.

13.♖e3! ♖hh3! 14.♔d4 ♖g4+ 15.♖e4 ♖hh4 16.♔d5 ♖g5+ 17.♖e5 ♖hh5 18.♔d6 ♖h6+ 19.♖e6! 1-0

Game 170 Level 5

Emilian Dobrescu

Study, 1995



White to play and win

An interesting composition that contains a few hidden concepts, as will become clear once we begin to solve the position.

1.♗b7!

White has to lure the black rook away from the 8th rank to gain a crucial tempo.

A) 1.♗e4?? ♔b6 2.f6 g6-+;

B) The direct approach to g8 with the bishop does not work, as Black is able to open the a1-h8 diagonal in time: 1.♗d5? e4!? 2.♗e6 (2.♗xe4?? g5 3.fxg6 ♖xc7-+) and Black can maintain the balance in multiple ways. One example: 2...♔b6!? 3.♗xc8 g5 4.fxg6 ♔xc7=.

1...♖xc7 2.♗d5!

Threatening a pawn promotion and in case Black stops it with the rook, the bishop will block it with ♗g8.

2.♗e4 ♖c8-+.

2...♖c8!?

2...♗b4+!? is an interesting defensive attempt from Black:

A) 3.♔d1? ♖c8!? (this is more entertaining than the alternative; 3...♖d7!? 4.h8♕ ♖xd5+ 5.♔e2 ♖d7 6.♕c8 ♖e7 is a nice fortress; Black should draw this comfortably) 4.♗g8 (it looks like Black has no hope, as the h-pawn is going to promote on the next move) 4...♖d8+! 5.♔c1 (the only move; 5.♔e2?? ♖d2+ 6.♔f3 ♖h2-+) 5...♗d2+! (5...♖c8+?? 6.♔b1+-) 6.♔c2 ♗h6 (Black has created a temporary cage and caught the newly-born white queen in it) 7.h8♕ ♔b4!. Now all the black pieces combine to create a cage for the white king, and there is no escape from perpetual checks. For example: 8.f6 ♖d2+ 9.♔c1 ♖d6+ or 9.♔b1 ♖d1+=;

B) 3.♔b1!. White has to be careful, as the alternative does not work in his favour, as we saw in A: 3...♖d7!? 4.h8♕ ♖xd5. This is not a fortress, as White wins the g7-pawn and wins easily with 5.♕xg7.

3.♗g8

For practical purposes, White should win easily as the pawn promotion cannot be stopped, but Black puts up a brave fight henceforth. While solving

this position, this defensive resource should also be found and refuted.

3...e4!? 4.h8♕ ♗e5+

A) 4...e3 5.♔d1+-;

B) 4...♗f6+ 5.♔d1 (5.♔d2 ♗g5+ 6.♔e2 ♗f4!=) 5...♗g5 does not work, as White's queen comes out of the cage: 6.♕xg7 ♖c1+ 7.♔e2 ♖c2+ 8.♔f1 ♖c1+ 9.♔g2+-. White's king too escapes the cage through the kingside.

5.♔b1!

White has to do some magic with his king to win in this position.

5.♔d1? ♗f4!, and White cannot prevent the perpetual check that follows.

5...♖b8+ 6.♔c2

6.♔a2? ♔a4! 7.♗b3+ ♖xb3 8.♕e8+ ♖b5=; 6.♔c1 ♖c8+ transposes to the main line.

6...♖c8+

6...♖b2+ 7.♔c1 ♖h2 (7...e3 8.♗c4 e2 9.♕d8+ ♔b4 10.♗xe2 ♖xe2 11.♕d3=) 8.♗h7 ♗f4+ 9.♔b1 and the white queen will come out soon with decisive effect.

7.♔b3!

7.♔d2? ♗f4+=; 7.♔d1? ♗f4=.

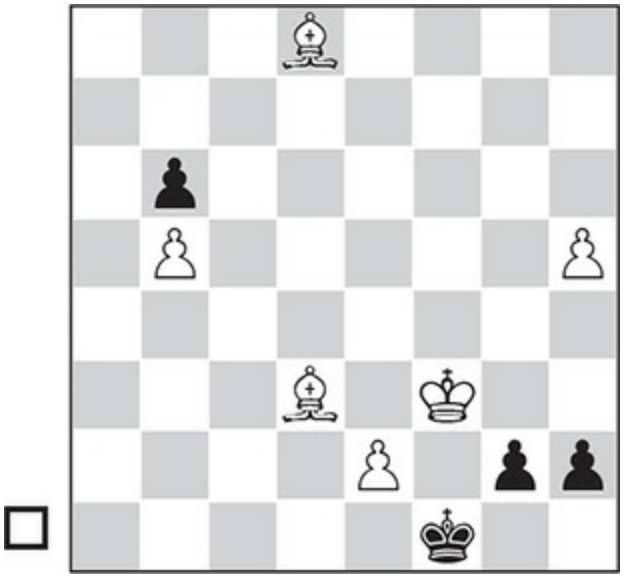
7...♖c3+

7...e3 8.♕h1+-; 7...♖b8+ 8.♔a3! e3 9.♕h1+-.

8.♔a2 ♖c2+ 9.♔a3!

Now Black is running out of checks, but he has other attempts to try to salvage something out of this position.
9.♔b1? ♖h2 10.♗h7 ♖b2+ 11.♔c1 ♖b8 12.♗g8 ♖c8++-. We reach a similar position as after 6...♖c8.
9...♖h2
9...♖c3+ 10.♗b3+-; the point of going to a3 with the king on the previous move.
10.♗h7 ♖h3+ 11.♔a2 ♖h2+ 12.♔b3! ♖b2+ 13.♔a3
13.♔c4 ♖b8 14.♗g8+-.
13...♖b8 14.♗g8 1-0
The white queen will come out via h7, and the win is, as the elders say, 'a matter of routine technique'.

Game 171 Level 5
Yochanan Afek
Study, 1982



White to play and win

1.e3+!
A) 1.♗h4? g1♘+!-+;
B) 1.e4+? ♔g1 2.♔g3 ♔h1!, and Black even wins!
1...♔g1 2.♗h4! h1♕

2...♔h1?! 3.♗e4! g1♕ 4.♔f4+ ♕g2 5.♗g3! ♔g1 6.♗xg2 ♔xg2 7.♗xh2+-.

3.♗f2+ ♔h2 4.♗g3+ ♔g1 5.♔g4!

The white pieces have dominated the black queen. But is this enough to win the game?

5...♕h2 6.♗e4! ♕h1 7.♗d5

Whenever White moves his bishop away from the a6-f1 diagonal, Black keeps shuffling the king to f1-g1. If the white bishop remains on the a6-f1 diagonal, Black's queen will shuffle between the h2- and h1-squares. White should find a creative way to win against this simple defensive idea from Black.

7...♔f1

7...♕h2? loses to 8.♗xh2+ ♔xh2 9.♗xg2.

8.♗c4+ ♔g1 9.♗e2 ♕h2 10.♗f3 ♕h1 11.♗e4!

Compare this with the position on the 5th move. The main difference is the position of the light-squared bishop.

11...♔f1 12.♗d3+ ♔g1

Comparing the position with the 5th move again, the main difference is that here it is White to play, whereas it was Black to play on move 5.
Basically, White has gained a critical tempo with his clever manoeuvre.

13.♗c4!

13.e4 ♕h2 14.e5 ♔h1 15.♗e4 ♕g1.

13...♕h2 14.♗d5!

White abandons the a6-f1 diagonal when the black queen is on h2, which prevents him from playing ♔f1, his usual reaction earlier.

14...♕h1 15.e4! ♕h2

15...♔f1 16.♗c4+ ♔g1 17.e5 ♕h2 18.♗d5+-.

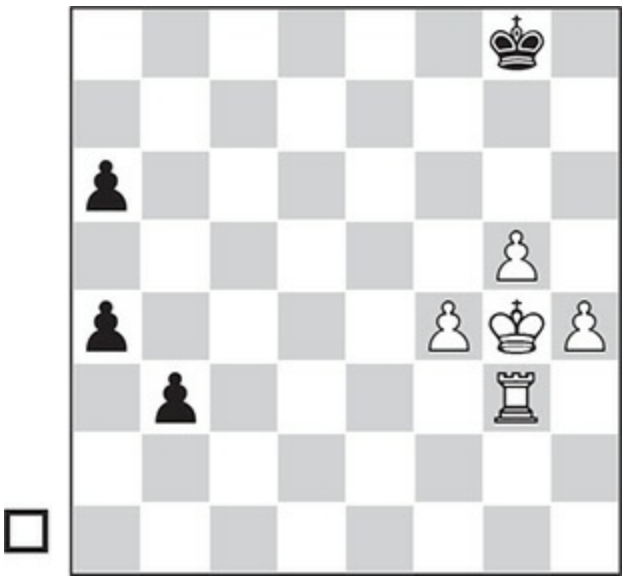
16.e5

And White wins.

Game 172 Level 5

Yochanan Afek

Study, 2007



White to play and win

In 2009, the Indian Junior team (below the age of 20) went to The Netherlands to play in a few International Open tournaments. I was sent as the coach for the team consisting of the top 6 players each from the Indian Juniors boys and girls championships. In one such tournament, WGM Padmini Rout had finished her game early, and we were analysing her game in the mini-bar adjacent to the playing hall. World-renowned composer IM Yochanan Afek was visiting the tournament, and he gave this position to us for solving. We tried for a couple of hours but got nowhere close to solving it. He mentioned that most grandmasters he had given this position to had not solved it either; some consolation that was!

1.♖e3!

The difference with placing the rook on the other files is not apparent now, but will become clear soon:

A) 1.♖d3? b2 2.♖d8+ ♔g7 3.♖b8 a3 4.f5 a2 5.f6+ ♔f7 6.♖b7+ ♔f8 7.♖b8+=;

B) 1.♖c3? b2 2.♖c8+ ♔f7 3.♖c7+ ♔f8=.

1...b2 2.♖e8+! ♔f7

2...♔g7 3.♖e1! a3 4.f5! a2 5.f6+ ♔f8 6.g6! b1♕ 7.g7+ ♔f7 8.♖e7+ ♔xf6 9.g8♘+! ♔g6 10.h5#.

3.♖e1! a3 4.f5!

4.♔f5? ♔g7! 5.g6 ♔h6! 6.♔f6 a2 7.♖e8 ♔h5 8.♖h8+ ♔g4 9.g7 a1♕ 10.g8♕+ ♔h3.

4...a2 5.g6+! ♔f8

White also wins after:

A) 5...♔f6 6.♖e6+ ♔g7 7.♔g5! b1♕ 8.f6+ ♔f8 9.g7+ ♔f7 10.♖e7+ ♔g8 11.♖e8++-;

B) 5...♔g7 6.♔g5! b1♕ 7.f6+ ♔f8 8.g7+ ♔f7 9.♖e7+ ♔g8 10.♖e8++-.

6.f6! b1♕ 7.g7+ ♔f7 8.♖e7+! ♔xf6 9.g8♘+! ♔g6 10.h5#

We are so lucky to have such creative minds enriching our beautiful game. I have used Afek's studies extensively with my students to improve their calculation skills.

Through this book, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all the wonderful composers for enriching our game and making it even more beautiful than it already is! Special thanks to Yochanan Afek, who has a special place in my heart, for kindly agreeing to use his studies in this book.

CHAPTER 7

Chess improvement suggestions from a coach

Frequent problems faced and mistakes made by upcoming chess players

1. Failure to calculate variations correctly. This, in my view, will rate among the top of the practical problems faced by most chess players.

2. They are not paying sufficient attention to what the opponent is doing while they are playing chess. Basically, they are living in their own world. We should realise we are playing only half of the game. Our opponent has a significant influence on what happens on the board. We should learn to attach due importance to that fact.

3. Lack of knowledge and proper understanding of important chess principles. Players read and hear about chess principles, but are not emotionally involved with the essence of those principles and find it tough to implement them in their games. For many, chess principles are politically-correct things to say, and when it comes to the application in their games, personal convenience takes precedence. A healthy trust in chess principles and what they stand for is good for the upcoming chess player’s career. When they mature into a stronger chess players, they will know when the exceptions matter, and can confidently break the principles because of some concrete details in the position.

4. A player often faces situations where he can apply a wide choice of principles on the board. Sometimes, these principles complement each other; at other times, they are contradictory to each other. For example, we may have to play a quiet move to ensure our king safety in the middle of a difficult attacking position, which will look like a loss of time. But it needs to be done anyway. Without a proper understanding of the principles, things can get confusing. The timing of their application could become a severe issue for

a player.

5. Incorrect evaluation of a position. Looking at a position, one player sees that he has an extra pawn and the advantage. But the other player sees that his pieces are more active; hence, he is better, despite being a pawn down. Some suggestions are: exposing ourselves to different kinds of positions, not falling prey to dogma, having a flexible mindset, clarity over priorities, etc. These suggestions can help us navigate this issue.

6. Some players have poor time management, both on and off the board. It has affected and continues to affect adversely the growth prospects of chess players across generations. We will consider the topic of time management in detail at a later stage. At the cost of making mistakes, we should force ourselves to play faster in a few tournaments, to overcome this issue before it develops into a strong habit.

7. Believing that the mistakes made are permanent and overcoming them is tough, no matter what we do in preparation at home. The mistakes we make in the initial stages of our chess career do not define us. They are instead an indication of the areas we need to work more on at home. We believe that we can unlearn negative traits in our thinking process, and replace them with a better version of ourselves.

8. One big mistake upcoming players make is to put too much emphasis on their opening preparation. They spend a lot of time learning and perfecting openings. Having a loophole-free opening repertoire is vital at higher levels, but not at the early stages of a chess player’s career. The priority should be to develop a healthy understanding of chess principles, and observe how strong players apply them appropriately across different openings.

9. For many, chess is not a priority, and they want to have fun playing chess and will be happy to make gradual progress in their playing skills. Others are very ambitious and want to make rapid progress in their chess journey. One should realise that a lot of work needs to be done regularly for this to happen. Many players struggle to overcome their laziness or the inability to work hard. Having high expectations without supporting effort will lead to frustrations and failed expectations at a later stage. It is better to have a schedule to give our chess sufficient time and make a habit of this.

10. A few players struggle with poor concentration, both during home preparation and while playing in tournament games. There could be multiple reasons for this: a lack of proper motivation to work, insufficient interest in upgrading their skills, a complacent attitude that their current skills are enough to get better results, and having too many priorities that compete for their attention in daily life.

11. Too much attention is bestowed on rating fluctuations and individual game results, rather than playing a good game by giving our best effort. Suppose we can shift our focus to enjoying everything about playing chess and practising chess. In that case, we will be able to do what is required to get good results and play good-quality chess.

12. Letting losses affect our confidence. Losing games can disappoint us, and make us sad. We should learn to get upset or disappointed in a manner that does not affect our confidence. Our losses happen because of the mistakes we make in our games. We should focus on knowing the kind of mistakes we make, and work on those areas to become a better version of ourselves. Tournament games are like the beta versions of ourselves. The mistakes we make are like the bugs in new software. By working on these issues, we overcome them and play better-quality chess.

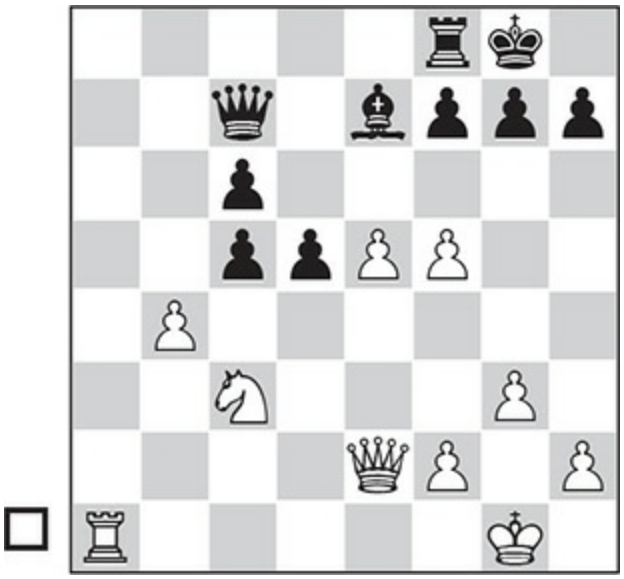
13. Some players collapse under the pressures related to tournament play: increasing our rating, playing against higher- or lower-rated opponents, getting surprised in the opening, our poor form, a loss in the previous round, our poor results in personal encounters with our upcoming opponent, strong play from our opponent, etc., can upset our balance and put us under tremendous pressure. Cultivating a robust mental set-up helps a lot in our progress, just like making progress in our chess skills.

14. Some players predetermine the result of the game based on the opponent’s rating. Playing against lower-rated players can affect many players negatively. They are worried before and during the game, that they will lose many rating points and lose their credibility in others’ eyes if they lose the game. I always insist that the priorities of my students should be as simple as possible. Putting in a reasonable effort and playing a good game should be our priority during a tournament. If we can manage to do this

consistently during a competition, we will have no reason to complain.

In this game, we can see young Pragg learning to believe in himself against strong opposition and holding his ground when things are getting not so easy.

Game 173 Level 4
Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa 1782
Teimour Radjabov 2758
New In Chess Rapid Preliminaries 2021



21.b5!
A very strong idea that poses tough problems for Black to solve.
21...d4!
21...c4? 22.bxc6 ♕xc6 23.♕f3+-.
22.b6!
The point of the whole concept with ♕e2 and f4-f5; after 22.f6?! Black can now equalise in multiple ways, and this lets him off the hook.
22...♕xb6 23.♘e4 f6!?
Otherwise, White will play 24.f6 himself.
24.e6?
24.♕c4+! ♔h8 25.♕e6 (White is not afraid of the connected central black pawns and is banking on his initiative on the other side) 25...♕c7 26.exf6 (26.♘d6!?♖h6!) 26...gxf6! (26...♗xf6 27.♘xc5) 27.♖a6!. White's pieces

are becoming very dangerous, but Black can hope to hold the balance with a difficult move: 27...d3! 28.♖xc6 ♕d8 29.♘d2±.

24...♕b5↰ 25.♕a2 ♕d3

25...c4 26.♕a7 ♕xf5 27.♕xe7 ♕xe4 28.♖a7 is probably the easiest way to equalise, but Black probably became ambitious at this point.

26.♕a7 ♕xe4 27.♕xe7 ♕xf5 28.h4!?

White also has his ambitions intact, giving his king more places to hide when the white rook abandons his base rank.

28...♕g4

28...♕g6 29.♖a7; 28...h6=.

29.♖a7

29...h5!

Full credit to Radjabov for bringing out the best.

30.♖d7 ♖a8??

A costly blunder towards the very end. A couple of accurate moves, and the draw could have been signed:

A) 30...♕g6! 31.♕xc5 ♕e4 32.e7 ♖e8=;

B) 30...♕d1+! 31.♔g2 ♕g4 32.♖d8 ♖xd8 33.♕xd8+ ♔h7 34.e7 ♕e4+=.

31.♖d8+ ♖xd8 32.♕xd8+ ♔h7 33.e7+-

A good winning attempt by White in the opening, and full credit to Radjabov

for finding his way among the various tempting continuations to equalise, only to throw it all away at the very end.
This is one reason why rapid games are more exciting for the audience, because the possibilities of mistakes are increased due to the shortage of time.

15. Lack of a proper work ethic, resulting in poor self-esteem. One of the defining features of strong chess players is that they are usually very sure of themselves. They believe that they are good players and are on the right path to getting there. For most of the others, self-doubt is a constant companion. Poor results, a rating slide, a wrong move, a bad game, negative criticism from people close to us, etc., can negatively impact us. A healthy work routine and proper learning can build our confidence over some time. Such confidence, gained through hard work, will not be shaken easily with a loss. We should learn to see losses as temporary setbacks, and not as defining moments in our careers.

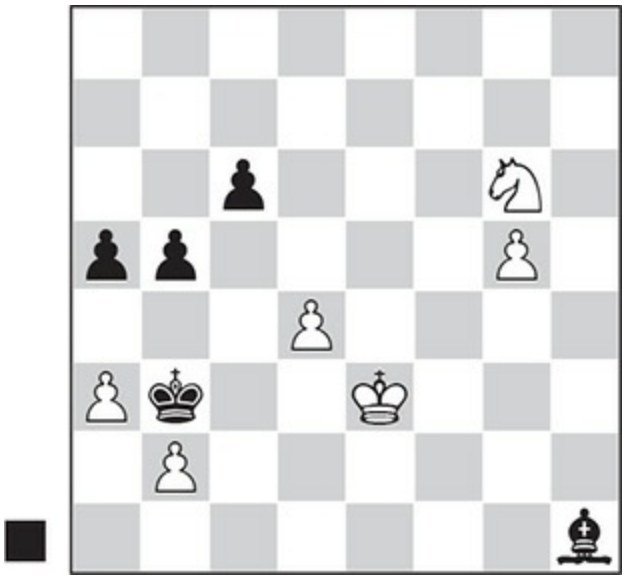
16. Disliking certain parts of the game (defence, endings, main lines, etc.) and avoiding them in preparation and during the game. Avoiding some aspects of chess in our games and practice is another common issue with some upcoming players. We need to become universal players who can handle any position. Our training at home should cover all aspects of the game over time. We can have our short-term priorities and focus on specific areas only. When we have long gaps between tournaments, we should focus on areas that we have avoided in the past. Areas we avoid will become weaknesses over time.

17. Some players outsource their learning completely to external sources, like streamers, coaches, authors, etc. The central part of a player’s learning should happen by self-effort. Education from other sources can be in the form of motivation, inspiration, gaining essential knowledge, technicalities, etc., but this can’t be all. We should develop the ability to observe, analyse, contemplate, and evolve in the process. We should never think that whatever we need to know, our coach will teach us. We should not be a spectator to our training process. Instead, we should be an active participant.

18. Some players relax too much when they get good positions. Others

give up easily without a fight in challenging situations during a game. A good position essentially means that, irrespective of how our opponent plays the rest of the game, we can win the game if we play good-quality chess. We should raise our alertness in good positions, as the game's result is purely in our hands. Similarly, in challenging situations, we should put up maximum resistance instead of collapsing. Try to make it as difficult as possible for the opponent. If we end up losing the game despite our reasonable efforts, so be it. At least we can be proud of our resistance. **Fighting back in challenging situations is a champion's quality.**

Game 174 Level 3
Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa 2220
Torben Sörenson 2334
Bangkok 2015 (8)



Due to a lack of experience, both players made a few instructive mistakes in this ending. Pragg was 10 years old when playing this game.

45...♗d5??

45...♔xb2!. Black should have calculated this variation well and would have survived: 46.♘f4. It appears that White's g-pawn will roll and there is nothing Black's bishop can do to stop it. However, Black has his own counterplay on the queenside: 46...b4! 47.axb4 (47.a4 b3 48.g6 ♔c2=)

47...a4! (this is the point: the a-pawn gives saving chances to Black) 48.g6 a3 49.g7 a2 50.g8♕ a1♕♙.

46.♘e7! ♗f7

46...♗e6 47.♘xc6 ♔xb2 48.♘xa5 ♔xa3 49.♔f4+-. The white knight will give himself up for the b-pawn, and Black's light-squared bishop cannot stop both passed pawns.

47.♘xc6

47.g6 was winning easily for White, e.g. 47...♗e6 48.♘xc6.

47...♔xb2

48.♘xa5?

The correct idea, but the incorrect move order! 48.♔e4! ♔xa3 49.d5 b4 (49...a4 50.d6+-) 50.♘xa5+-.

48...♔xa3 49.♔e4

An incorrect move order that gives Black a surprising counter-attacking idea.

49...♔b4??

And Black misses it!

49...♔a4! was correct, driving the knight away from the b-passer: 50.♘b7! b4 51.d5 ♗g6+! (51...♗e8 52.♔e5 ♔b5 53.♘d6++-) 52.♔e5 (52.♔d4 ♔b5 53.♘c5 ♗f7= or 53...♗c2=; 53...♔b6? 54.d6+-) 52...♔b5! (52...b3?? 53.♘c5+ ♔a3 54.♘xb3+-) 53.d6 b3 54.d7 b2 55.d8♕ b1♕♙.

50.♘b7 ♗g6+ 51.♔e5 ♔c3 52.d5 b4 53.♘a5 b3 54.♘xb3 1-0

19. Some players live with a constant feeling of missing something in their chess life. They feel that they are missing the one crucial piece in the puzzle, and that acquiring that missing piece will take them to the next level.

20. Some players expect great results within a short period of putting in a reasonable effort. It can happen for some, but the effort has to be consistent for most. Learning and improving is a long-term process, and it requires a particular commitment from the player.

The learning process

A player might feel that some areas of chess do not suit his natural style in his career's early stages. Progress in chess also means the ability to work on, learn, improve, master, and even start liking such areas in chess.

Having worked with players from different generations and cultural backgrounds, I realised that **the mere sharing of information only leads to knowledge accumulation. It does not translate into practical skill sets. A player not only needs to be taught about things, but also needs to be made to do those things correctly for effective learning**. The coach or the player should provide space to make mistakes, gain experience, analyse, learn, correct mistakes, and acquire the skills eventually. It is a process.

Over the years, I have given numerous interesting positions to students varying in age, rating, experience, strength, etc. The outcome is always exciting and consistent. When players of different levels see the same position, they do not see the same things. An individual's vision is heavily clouded by various factors, like their knowledge, experience, analytical skills, ambition level, current form, energy level, motivation to improve, time to think, etc.

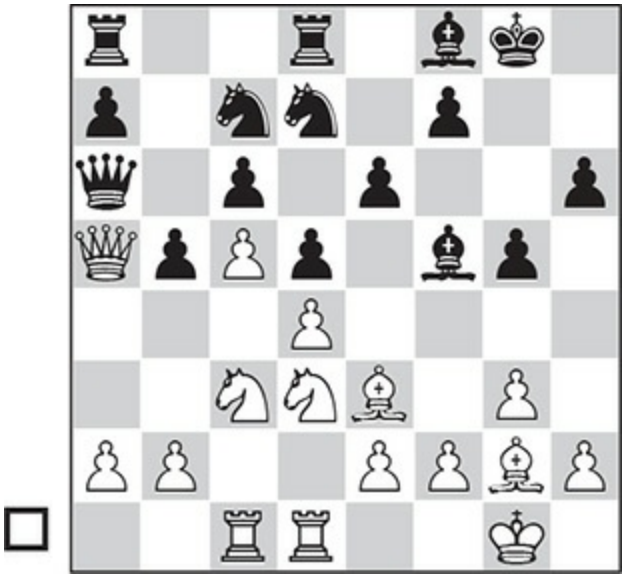
I learned as a coach that a player needs to be taught to do things in a certain way, and if that does not work for him, he should be taught in other ways to do the same things. There are different ways to do something, and each player has his own sweet spot. A coach should help the player to try different ways to do things and, hopefully, find a way that works for him in

the process.

Chess coaching involves effectively trying out different methods, techniques, approaches, and angles to drive home a given point until it makes sense to the individual. **It is not only the coach's responsibility to teach things to the player, but it is also the responsibility of every player to teach themselves things effectively. Every player has a duty to himself for what he learns and how he learns it.**

Improvement happens only when learning happens. Learning occurs when both the pros and cons of an argument are shown. This is followed by a sincere effort to understand the issues involved, and question our biases and prejudices. Finally, we change ourselves and evolve due to the whole experience. Learning is an intensely personal experience.

Game 175 Level 3
Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa 2509
Semen Lomasov 2490
Tarvisio 2017 (10)



21.♕b4

This is a safe continuation for White, but there was another ambitious and slightly risky variation possible as well: 21.♕xc7!. This move requires some good calculation to back it up: 21...♗xd3! (21...♖ac8? 22.♘b4+-)

22.♘xd5!. The key move behind 21.♕c7. Now:

A) 22...cxd5? 23.♖xd3 ♖ac8 24.♖a3 ♕xa3 25.♕xd8 ♕xe3 26.♕xf8+ ♔xf8 27.fxe3±;

B) 22...♖ac8 23.♘b4 ♕a4 24.♕b7 ♗xe2 25.♖e1 ♕xb4 26.♖xe2 ♕a5 27.♗xc6 ♖b8 28.b4! ♕a3 29.♕c7 ♖bc8 30.♕xd7 ♖xd7 31.♗xd7 ♖c7 32.♗xb5±;

C) 22...exd5! 23.♖xd3 ♖ac8. It appears that the white queen is trapped, but... 24.♖a3! (not quite so!) 24...♕xa3! 25.♕xd8! (another intermediate move for White!) 25...♕xe3! (the only way for Black to keep material parity) 26.♕xf8+ ♔xf8 27.fxe3 ♘f6 28.h3⩲. White keeps an extra pawn, which does not mean his advantage is significant, as the pawns are doubled and the ♗g2 is quite hemmed in by the black pawn chain on c6 and d5.

21...♕b7 ½-½

Over the decades, I have seen many chess players fight a losing battle for chess improvement, get frustrated, quit chess, or move away from the game with disillusionment. To see this happen to so many is very sad. They are convinced they could have improved much faster and to a much higher level of strength than they eventually ended up with.

In this series of books, I hope to approach the learning process from a practical viewpoint. This can mean a few blanket statements, sweeping generalisations, and conclusions that go against tradition. I hope you, the reader, will indulge me in this. Please ignore what is not acceptable to you.

A good player should have the capability to learn the proper lessons from what is being taught or discussed: what is said, what is left unsaid, incorrectly said, and from the exaggerations. We should learn from all of it!

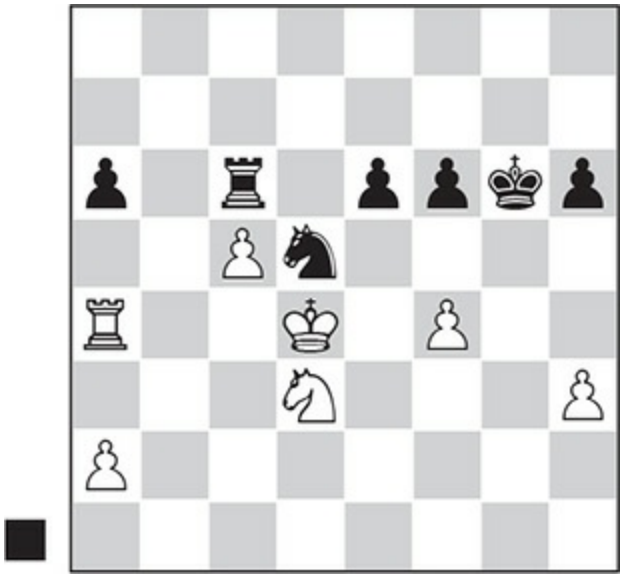
One of the problems I have faced repeatedly as a coach is that many (not ‘a few’) players have the understanding that ‘I realise I have to improve my chess playing skills to get better results, but the effort I am willing to invest is minimal.’ It is an ‘I have come to you, a good coach. I will pay your fees and attend the classes. Make me a strong chess player by working your magic on me’ kind of attitude. It does not work like that!

Most players and parents think that improvement in chess can happen

quickly if a player learns openings and makes progress in calculation skills, endgame knowledge, positional understanding, attacking skills, etc. But what I have seen in my experience is that improvement is possible only when the player concerned is capable and interested in improving by putting in the required effort, time and energy. The learning ability of an individual is grossly neglected when discussing the topic of chess improvement.

In the following game, we see Pragg trying to get something in the endgame against Magnus Carlsen, who is a known specialist in the endgame area.

Game 176 Level 4
Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa 1781
Magnus Carlsen 2881
New In Chess Rapid Preliminaries 2021 (13)



40...♔f5
This gives White a chance to justify his decision of not agreeing to a draw earlier.
40...♘e7! 41.♘b4 ♘f5+! 42.♔c4 ♘d6+ 43.♔d4 ♘f5+= was the simpler way, but not easy to find with less time on the clock.
41.♘b4!
While watching the game, I was very excited about this position, thinking

that Pragg had a good chance to win the endgame. But Carlsen defended very well under pressure, proving amply why he is the best in the business.

41...♘xb4 42.♖xb4 ♖c8!

He played this instantly; a nice prophylactic move, and the only move as well. It shows the depth of his understanding and his strong nerves under pressure.

43.♖b6 e5+!

Creating his own passed pawn, which gives him sufficient counterplay.

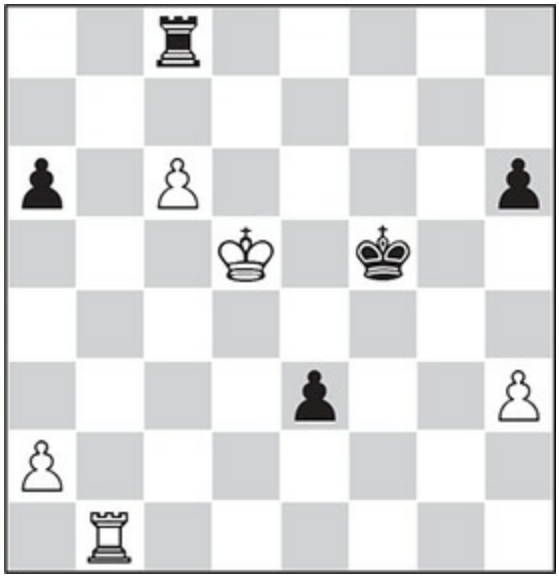
44.fxe5 fxe5+ 45.♔d5 e4! 46.c6 e3!

Black plays accurately with a series of only moves.

A) If 46...♖d8+??, 47.♔c5 e3 48.c7 gains a crucial tempo and wins easily;

B) 46...♔f4?? 47.♔d6 e3 48.c7+-.

47.♖b1



47...e2!

This seems to blunder the e2-pawn, as Black's king is too far away to support it, but Carlsen has everything under control.

47...♖d8+?? was tempting but bad: 48.♔c5 ♖d2 49.c7 ♖c2+ 50.♔b6 e2 51.♔b7+-.

48.♖e1

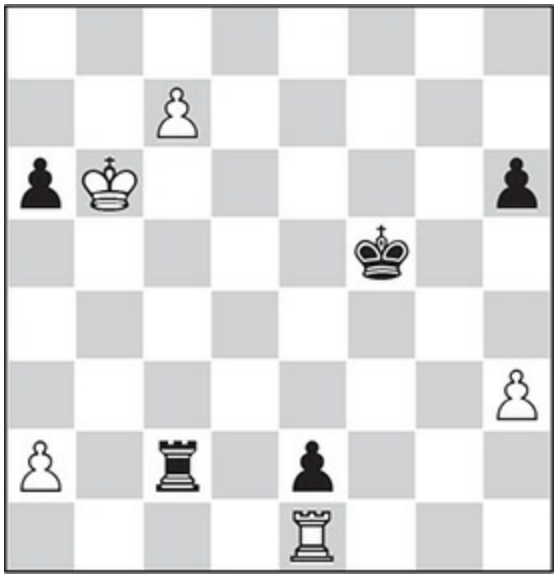
48.♔d6!? was another interesting attempt and one that would have been

harder to defend against over the board with less time on the clock: 48...♖d8+ 49.♔c5 ♖d2 (49...♔e5!? 50.c7 ♖d5+ (50...♖d2 51.♔c6 ♖d6+! 52.♔b7 ♖d1=) 51.♔c6 ♖d6+ 52.♔b7 ♖d1=) 50.c7 ♔e5! (the only move to save the game) 51.♔c6 (51.♖c1?? ♖d1!-+) 51...♖d6+! 52.♔b7 ♖d1!= (first, it was important to drive the white king to the b-file, so that when White promotes his c-pawn, the ♖b1 move will come with check) 53.♖b3!? (53.♖b6 ♖c1) 53...e1♕ 54.c8♕ ♕e4+ 55.♔b8 ♖d6!= (55...♕f4 56.♕e8+ ♔f5+ 57.♔b7 ♕e4+ 58.♕xe4+ ♔xe4 59.♔xa6).

48...♖d8+! 49.♔c5 ♖d2

Black gets his rook behind White's passed pawn and equalises just in time.

50.c7 ♖c2+ 51.♔b6



Threatening 52.♖xe2!.

51...♖b2+! 52.♔a7

52.♔xa6 ♖xa2+=.

52...♖c2 53.♔b7 ♖b2+ 54.♔c6 ♖c2+ 55.♔d6 ♖d2+ 56.♔e7 ♖c2 57.♔d7 ♖d2+ 58.♔c6 ♖c2+ 59.♔b6 ♖b2+ 60.♔a7 ♖c2 61.♖xe2 ♖xc7+ 62.♔xa6

This ending is simply equal, and Magnus earned the half point easily.

62...♖c3 63.♖h2 ♔f4 64.a4 ♔g3 65.♖h1 h5 66.h4 ♖b3 67.a5 ♖b2 68.♔a7 ♖b5 69.a6 ♖b2 70.♔a8 ♖b5 71.a7 ♖b2 72.♖c1 ♔xh4 73.♖c7 ♔g3 74.♖b7 ♖a2 75.♔b8 h4 76.♖g7+ ♔f3 77.a8♕+ ♖xa8+ 78.♔xa8 h3 79.♖h7 ♔g2 80.♖xh3 ♔xh3 ½-½

A very good battle by young Pragg and the World Champion. Pragg showed he was not overwhelmed by the reputation of his opponent and was willing to trust in his abilities.

Over the centuries, we have seen in the classroom that not everyone is good at learning everything in the most efficient manner, even though the same topics from the same book, simultaneously with the same explanations, are taught in a classroom. All students in the classroom are listening under the same conditions, but not all of them learn the things taught with the same efficiency. Some learn well, some learn averagely, and some learn poorly.

The students' interest to learn the things taught, the learning ability of each student, the understanding capabilities, the concentration in the class, the energy levels of the students, etc., vary from individual to individual. This has a significant impact on how well each student learns. The same applies to chess learning as well.

So, the assumption that anyone can learn anything equally well is not correct in my view. Good learners have taught themselves how to learn well in their field of expertise. Unless this happens along with chess work, learning in chess will not occur at the expected level. Hence, improvement will also be at a level corresponding to the learning ability of the player concerned.

It takes a lot of commitment and effort from an individual to become a strong chess player. Unfortunately, I have seen on social media that there are some who encourage the 'minimum effort – maximum gain' philosophy towards chess learning. We cannot provide an excess of fertiliser, sunlight, water and pesticides, and make the plant grow into a tree in less than the usual time frame. Progress in chess can be accelerated only to the extent that a player is willing to invest in himself during the journey.

Finding an idea and its implementation

Spotting an exciting idea or a tricky concept in a position and its correct implementation is like two different tracks on which a train can run. The

implementation of a theory involves paying attention to the move orders, checking the details thoroughly, and not making intuitive decisions. A player should not get carried away or overwhelmed once he finds an interesting idea that appears to be correct at first glance.

Usually, strong players find the right idea quickly, but take much longer to check the details. They do not want to miss any critical element, and consciously look for the refutation of their arguments. When they are convinced that they have not missed any detail in their analysis, their idea becomes a decision. Until then, the moves or the views are simply just that, and they are not final.

When we see an idea, it should not become a decision immediately. Paying conscious attention to details is essential. Significant decisions should be taken only at the right time, and not as soon as you see them.

Training versus actual tournament play

Training should always be more challenging than tournament play. Another school of thought says that training should simulate as close as possible the actual tournament situation.

I believe in the former school of thought.

If you see the YouTube video where Usain Bolt trains for his competitions, he ties stones to his legs, runs in sand, and pushes his body to its limits in training. But in actual competition, he does not tie stones to his legs nor runs in sand. When we train in more challenging circumstances, push ourselves to do difficult things, and get used to a new level of toughness, our capacity and capability to handle difficult situations increase.

In training, I usually push my students to go as deep as possible into the analysis. Over a period, this becomes the new normal. They will learn to do complex calculations and learn to analyse faster than others.

In the following game, a relatively unknown student of mine, Raahul, played powerfully from a tough opening situation. He came up with a creative attacking concept and almost made it work against a stronger opponent. Towards the very end, Raahul could not push himself harder to go all out for

a win by finding some very hard-to- find resources over the board, and he settled for a draw.

Game 177 Level 4

Jaime Santos Latasa	2571
Raahul VS	2182

Cannes 2017

1.d4 f5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 e6 4.♕c2 d5 5.♗f4 ♗d6 6.♗xd6 ♕xd6 7.♘f3
7.e3 c6.
7...c6 8.e3 0-0 9.♗d3 ♘bd7 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.♘b5 ♕b4+ 12.♔e2?! ♘b6 13.a3 ♕e7 14.♕c5 ♕d8 15.♖hc1 ♗d7 16.♕d6 ♘e4 17.♕e5
17.♕c7 ♕e8 18.♘d6 ♕e7! (18...♕h5 19.♔f1⩲) 19.♘xb7 ♖ac8 20.♕e5 ♘c4 21.♗xc4 dxc4⩢.

In relation to the pawn structure, White has made a favourable exchange of bishops, which would be a telling factor if the position was only static. However, there are more dynamic factors in the position. Black puts the relatively unsafe white king's position in the centre to full use:
17...♘a4!
17...♘c4 18.♗xc4 dxc4 19.♘c7 (19.♖xc4 ♕b6 20.a4 ♘d6!∞) 19...♖c8 20.♘xe6+-.
18.♘c7 ♘xb2

18...♖c8 19.♘xe6+-.

19.♘xa8?!

White evaluates the position incorrectly and, perhaps looking for a non-existent advantage, takes it too far.

Correct was 19.♘xe6! ♗xe6 20.♕xe6+ ♔h8 21.♗xe4 (21.♘e5 ♘g5 22.♕d7 ♘xd3 23.♔xd3 ♕f6, with a complex position that looks more than fine for Black because of White's king) 21...fxe4 22.♘e5 ♘d3 (22...♕f6 23.♕xf6 gxf6 24.♘d7 ♖f7 25.♘c5 b6 26.♘e6 ♘d3 27.♖c6±) 23.♘f7+ ♖xf7 24.♕xf7 ♕b6 25.♖cb1 (25.♖c2 ♕b5 26.♔d1 ♕a5=) 25...♕a6 26.♔d2 ♕a5+ 27.♔e2 ♕a6. Black's material deficit is compensated by the possibility of troubling White's king. The game remains in balance.

19...♘xd3∓

19...♘xf2 20.♗xf5 (20.♗c2 ♘c4 21.♕c7) 20...♖xf5 21.♕c7.

20.♔xd3 ♕a5!

Directly creating a counterattack against the opponent's king, rather than trying to regain any material.

20...♗b5+ 21.♔c2 ♗a4+ 22.♔b2+-.

21.♖c7

21.♘c7 f4!∓, with the idea of ...♖f5, is extremely dangerous. If instead 21...♗b5+ 22.♘xb5 ♕xb5+ 23.♔c2 ♖c8+ 24.♔d1 ♘xf2+ (24...♕f1+

25.♘e1 ♘xf2+ 26.♔d2 ♘e4+ 27.♔d1=) 25.♔e1 ♖xc1+ 26.♔xf2 ♖xa1 27.♕b8+ ♔f7 28.♘e5+ ♔e7 29.♕c7+ ♔e8 30.♕c8+ ♔e7 31.♕c7+ is equal.

21...♕a6+!

Black goes for a direct approach, which should still be enough to win.

A) 21...♖xa8 22.a4 ♕a6+ 23.♔c2 ♖d8;

B) 21...♗b5+ 22.♔c2 ♗a4+?? 23.♔c1+–;

C) However, he had a much stronger move in the form of restricting the white king's escape route with 21...♕a4!!. Black threatens to give mate with 22...♗b5, and this leads to a forced win, whatever White tries: 22.♔e2 (22.♖f1) 22...♗b5+ 23.♔e1 ♕a5+ 24.♔d1 ♘xf2+ 25.♔c2 ♗a4+ 26.♔b1 ♕b5+-+.

22.♔c2 ♗a4+!

22...♖xa8 23.♖b1! (23.♖c1 ♕xa3-+); 22...♕e2+ 23.♔b3 ♕d3+=.

23.♔b2 ♕b5+

23...♕e2+ 24.♔b1.

24.♔c1 ♕f1+

24...♖f6?? 25.♖c8+ ♔f7 26.♖b1+-.

25.♔b2 ♕xf2+ 26.♔b1 ♕f1+ 27.♔b2 ♕xg2+ 28.♔b1 ♕f1+ 29.♔b2 ♕e2+ 30.♔c1

30.♔b1 ♕d3+ 31.♔b2 ♕b3+ 32.♔c1 ♕xe3+-+.

30...♕xe3+ 31.♔b2 ♕f2+ 32.♔b1 ♕f1+ 33.♔b2 ♕g2+

33...♕e2+ 34.♔b1 and now:

A) 34...♕f1+ 35.♔b2 ♕g2+ 36.♔b1 ♔h8 37.♖a2 ♕f1+ 38.♔b2 ♕e2+ 39.♔b1 ♕d3+ 40.♔b2 ♖g8-+;

B) 34...♖f6 35.♖c8+ ♔f7 36.♕c7+ ♔g6 37.♘e5+ ♔h5 (37...♔h6? 38.♖a2 ♕e1+ 39.♕c1+) 38.♖a2 ♕d1+ 39.♕c1 ♕xd4!-+;

C) 34...♗d7 35.♖xd7 ♘c3+ 36.♔c1 ♕d1+ 37.♔b2 ♘a4+ 38.♔a2 ♕c2#.

34.♔b1

34...♔h8

A) Also good was 34...h6! 35.♖a2 ♕f1+ 36.♖c1 (36.♔b2 ♕e2+ 37.♔c1 ♕d1+ 38.♔b2 ♖f6-+) 36...♘c3+ 37.♔b2 ♕f2+ 38.♔xc3 ♕xa2 and Black wins;

B) 34...♖f6? 35.♖c8+ ♔f7 36.♕c7+ ♔g6 37.♘h4++-;

C) 34...♗d1? 35.♖a2!+-.

35.♖a2

A) 35.♘e1 ♘d2+ 36.♔c1 ♕g5 37.♕e2 ♘b3+-+;

B) 35.♘h4 ♘d2+ 36.♔c1 (36.♔a2 ♗b3+ 37.♔b2 ♘c4+) 36...♘b3+ 37.♔b1 ♕g1+-+.

35...♕f1+ 36.♔b2 ♖g8 ½-½

36...♕f2+ 37.♔b1 ♕f1+ 38.♔b2 ♕e2+ 39.♔b1 ♕d1+ 40.♔b2 ♖g8 was

winning for Black, because of the threat of 41...♕b3+, followed by 42...♘c3. There are no threats for White, whereas Black will get back the material with dividends.

About the actual tournament situation, how should we think when we reach a difficult position? Should we try to go very deep to uncover all the subtleties, nuances and critical moves in the position, or should we do some customary analysis and intuitively perceive things?

There are no hard and fast rules here. However, we should consider the following things before deciding on this:

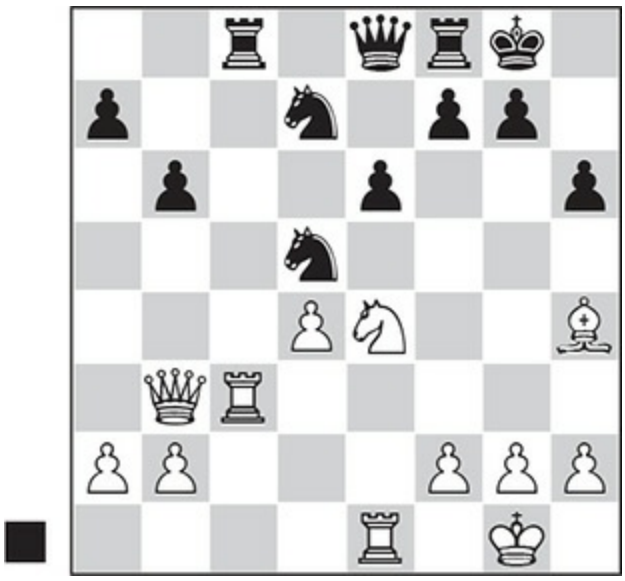
1. Time remaining on the clock.
2. Our current form.
3. The position on the board. Is it calculable or too complex? Are things forced, or are things not very forced?
4. The tournament situation and what we need from this game.
5. Our confidence, or lack of it, in our ability to calculate deeper.
6. Our training methods.

In the next game, Pragg's opponent sacrificed an exchange right out of the opening. Pragg had the option to accept the sacrifice, but he had to calculate and evaluate the resulting positions well, or decline the exchange and play in a position that is easier to play for him.
Pragg chose the latter option. However, an argument could be made that an upcoming, evolving player should learn to trust his instincts and be willing to push himself out of his comfort zone and test his limits.

Game 178 Level 4

Eric de Haan	2304
Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa	2515

Gibraltar 2018 (6)



In this position right out of the opening, White sacrificed an exchange and Pragg declined it. He felt that White gets good compensation, but a deeper look tells us otherwise:

18...♖xc3

The critical 18...♘xc3! should have been played. But many times, we need to calculate very deeply and accurately to justify such decisions: 19.♘d6 ♘e2+ 20.♔f1 (20.♔h1 ♖c1!-+) 20...♘c5! (this is a difficult move to spot) 21.dxc5 ♘d4! (leaving the second knight on a loose square just after sacrificing the other knight is practically too difficult) 22.♕c4 (22.♕d3 ♕a4! 23.b3 (23.♘xc8 ♖xc8 24.b3 ♘xb3 25.axb3 ♕xh4-+) 23...♘xb3!∓, exploiting the hanging nature of the ♗h4) 22...♕d7! (indirectly defending the ♘d4) 23.♘xc8 (23.♕xd4 ♖xc5 24.♗g3 ♖d5 25.♕b4 ♖d8 26.♘e4 ♖d1-+) 23...♖xc8 24.b4. It looks like White has stabilised without much damage, but now the next wave begins: 24...a5! 25.a3 ♘b5!! 26.a4 ♘d4-+.

19.♘xc3∞

Now the position was balanced but easy to play for Black.

Learning to use our resources efficiently and effectively

a) Individual inner qualities: talent, ability to learn, passion for the game,

ability to work hard, endurance, commitment, fighting spirit, time management, hunger for knowing and growing, self-belief in challenging situations, ability to change ourselves as per the requirement, energy levels, ability to concentrate on the job at hand especially under demanding conditions, emotional stability, handling expectations and criticisms from people who matter more to us and from the rest, turning our shortcomings into our strengths, etc.

b) External resources, like the opportunity to train with effective coaches or players, access to books/databases/videos, parental support, financial situation, support from the school, a lack of the above, etc.

Chess is time-intensive

Excellence in chess involves time-intensive effort. There are no ways around this. It requires a degree of long-term commitment from the player, and a willingness to put in consistent effort over time. The ability to learn, the interest shown towards learning, improving, and getting more robust in the process, the hunger for knowledge, the fighting qualities at times of difficulty, good concentration, optimum time management skills, the ability to handle pressure, being self-reliant, a healthy self-esteem – all these and many such qualities will make the journey more purposeful and rewarding. Being reasonably ambitious with complete understanding and an acceptance that it involves a cost, that is, long-term gains over short-term pains, are some of the main qualities required of a player. These qualities, which can be cultivated with deliberate effort, make the learning process efficient.

When we take up playing chess seriously, we also bring our personality traits into the journey. They have a significant impact on how we play, learn, improve, practice, concentrate, etc. There will be some personality traits that will not let us learn effectively and will hamper our performance. Chess learning is effective only if we evolve into someone better along the way on these issues.

Knowing is not doing

We should be ready to change our nature for the better, and evolve throughout our association with chess. Long-term commitment is essential – the right attitude towards the learning process. Implementing what we learn from different sources is especially important – merely accumulating knowledge and what needs to be done and how, is not sufficient. Knowing we can sacrifice a pawn for rapid development is no use if we cannot decide over the board due to the factors that pull us back.

Improving our capabilities – the aim of preparation

There are many hidden resources in almost every position; we should improve our analytical abilities to bring out as many of these resources as possible. We should be ready to invest more time/energy/effort in every position than we generally would. Learning and acquiring these capabilities is the main aim of chess preparation.

Importance of training correctly

In my experience as a coach, I have come across many students who are very passionate about chess, highly ambitious, very hard-working, have a supportive family, and yet they still do not make much progress in their chess strength, and eventually end up with mediocre results. This leads to disillusionment, frustration, helplessness, and loss of confidence in themselves, apart from the monumental waste of time, effort, and energy. Why does this happen? Is studying chess sincerely and for many hours not good enough to be successful?

To understand this, we should go deeply into the underlying issues that hamper effective learning. When does actual learning happen? Learning happens only when we change within for the better. **Learning happens when we focus on the process, rather than on the outcome**. It is essential to go to the depth of an issue, rather than being satisfied with the explanation on the surface, and to search for what is beyond the obvious and visible to the naked eye. We should be a seeker of truth with single-minded devotion.

The right attitude towards the learning process is essential. Throughout our association with chess, we try to evolve for the better. Accumulating information and knowledge are not enough. The skill to implement what we learnt from different sources is essential.

Reasons for missing moves

1. Being complacent, not serious about analysing, but making a routine effort to analyse without commitment, not making a serious effort.
2. Being satisfied after seeing a few moves.
3. Not being alert enough.
4. A lack of interest in finding the truth.
5. Not concentrating enough due to tiredness, a distracted mind, and a lack of interest in learning and improving.
6. Lack of proper training. As a result, the player has not learnt to go deeply into the position and find the hidden, tough-to-find resources.
7. A lack of skills to handle the problems posed by the position.

The role of a coach

1. Setting goals based on students' ability and work ethics.
2. Cultivate a passion for chess and towards learning through struggle.
3. Make the students aware that a lot needs to be understood, and that we should start now!
4. Remove the fear of bad results, or, put in other words, teach them how to handle losses and temporary setbacks.
5. Teach the student not to play to satisfy others' expectations, but rather play for one's love for the game.
6. Not to fear others' criticisms when results are not favourable.
7. Teach the student that learning more and becoming more vital in the process is the only way to ensure good results in the long run.
8. Teach the student the value of hard work.
9. Knowing is not doing; mere accumulation of knowledge and information is not enough. Students should upgrade analytical skills as well.

10. We should also play for experimenting, learning and to get to know more about ourselves, and not just for good results.

11. Teach how to manage time, on and off the board, effectively.

12. Help the student to form a schedule to prepare at home.

13. Teach the student the importance of self-learning from books, analysing games, etc.

14. Teach the student how to concentrate better by overcoming distractions.

15. Prioritise learning over results.

16. Teach the student the importance of upgrading yourself continuously.

17. Do not judge students on a game-to-game or tournament-to-tournament basis.

18. Give students space to make mistakes and learn.

Coaching should not just be seen as a means of earning income. Teaching should not be restricted to sharing information with the kids. Teachers must inspire, motivate, explain, converse, share, learn, connect, and evolve with them. If a child gives his best effort, I consider him successful in that activity. We should share equally their painful moments and their joys along their journey.

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